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Rethinking Traditional Theology of Christian Education in the Black Church

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by

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ABSTRACT

Rethinking Traditional Practices of the Theology of Christian Education in the Black Church

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The traditional practice of Christian Education in the Black Church may sustain the present congregations, but it will not attract the younger generations. Therefore, the Black Church must rethink its traditional practices of the theology of Christian Education to attract Millennials and Generations X, Y, and Z? More specifically, this project argues that to be more attractive to younger generations, Black Churches must become more diverse, inclusive, and multicultural to address the issues of age, sexual orientation, race, and social justice, through the practical theology of Christian Education. Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church (MSMBC) of Jacksonville, Florida is the local exegesis for this project and two focus groups were engaged. The first group of six individuals were Millennials and Generation X; while the second group of six were Generation Y and Generation Z. Of the 12 participants, 10 were members of MSMBC. Each group was then asked to expound upon what they felt MSMBC could do to attract more members of their generation. Overall, analysis found that, among other things, youth wanted sports and social activities, opportunities for leadership, business training, the church to be non-judgmental, emotional and mental support, as well as more diversity and inclusivity. Overall findings as well as generation-specific findings were used to develop a curriculum for rethinking traditional theology for Christian education. This document concludes with limitations, implications, and areas for future research.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to all of my ancestors of the Bantu Tribes of Western Africa, Joe and Rebecca Reese my great-great grandparents who were slaves; Rosa Reese Williams my great-grandmother who was born into slavery and freed as a young child; Minnie Lee Gundy my grandmother, and Willie Lee Gundy my mother, who was the first of her siblings to attend college. I dedicate this work to my father's lineage Mary Moss, my grandmother, and Rev. Dr. Halsom M. Moss Sr., my father. To my devoted wife, lover, and sweetheart whom I love with all of my heart, Wallette Denise Williams-Gundy. To Andrew Lovett III, my step-son, Darrion our grandson, Savia our granddaughter whom I named, and to our great-grandchildren Chase, Nasir and Ezkiel. Finally, to the Historic Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church congregation.

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An immense thank you to Rev. Dr. Willie D. Francois, III who was called to empower people through transformative preaching, teaching and organization, and to Dr. Juan Battle who mentored me through this dissertation, I will always remember, "Gundy, you are writing a revival and I need you to write to a church for this dissertation." It helped me refocus on this project. Also, Rev. Dr. Susan Smith of Cleveland, Ohio who always brought a feminine perspective to the table for consideration in intersectionality and social justice applications.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

I conducted a local exegesis Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church (MSMBC) and conducted a survey that targeted 12 Millennials, X, Y and Z generations, to determine their perspective of what the church needs to build and implement a project that will enable it to attract youth and young adults. This project will provide documented results from surveys and interviews that were conducted with Generations X, Y, Z, and one Alpha youth. Their ages ranged from 50 to 12. Rev. Dr. Allyn Waller of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, coached me during this exercise; I visited his church to observe empirical examples of their programs. I asked Pastor Paul Hassell to visit Mother Midway A.M. E., and Pastor Bryan Boyd to observe Open Arms Church of Jacksonville, Florida to confirm that diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism are practiced. Moreover, I requested their assistance to research and build a Christian Education curriculum (with tool kit) to address the needs of the younger generations at MSMBC and at Black Churches. Their observations, combined with my research, helped me to design a practical curriculum that contains the resources that MSMBC and Black Churches will employ to rethink the traditional theology of Christian Education. There are two curricula 1) I designed and developed; 2) Generations X, Y, and Z designed. I compared the curriculums to synergize the opinions around how to attract generations X, Y, Z, and how to address age, sexual orientation, and race (ethnicity) in Black Churches. I wanted to know how the Black Churches could become more diverse, inclusive, and multicultural. I wanted to know if addressing social justice issues might attract young adults to Black Churches. We conducted action-oriented research using input from individuals

and groups, and qualitatively through the use of interviews, surveys and observations. Our observations exposed and provided insight about perceptions versus the reality of social behaviors at MSMBC and the other churches we observed. During this research we discovered that younger generations would return to and remain with Black Churches, when the important issues of diversity, inclusivity, multicultural, intergeneration, age, sexual orientation, race and social justice are recognized, integrated and addressed consistently. The surveyed group agreed that the Black Church must rethink its traditional theology of Christian Education; it must preach, teach, engage small social groups, and integrate youth activities to attract the targeted generations. New members are critical components to church stability and transformation. Younger generations believe it is necessary to eliminate judgmental behaviors and hostile atmosphere around differences. The results were mixed from the respondents, and my findings revealed that the Black Church must rethink its traditional theology of Christian education by integrating and treating age, sexual orientation, race (ethnicity) and social justice issues at MSMBC and at other Black Churches in America. Duane Elmer, the G. W. Aldeen Professor of International Studies at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School wrote in his book "*Cross Cultural Conflict*," that "Cultural Diversity Was God's Idea."[1]

This project will challenge pastors, church polity, various denominations, Sunday School Publishing boards, and Christian organizations to understand diversity as God's idea and to consider what Bell Hooks stated in her book *Teaching Critical Thinking*, "Thinking is an action! For intellectuals, thoughts are the lab where one goes to pose questions and find answers, and the place where visions of theory and praxis come together.[2]

[1] Elmer, Duane. *Cross-cultural conflict: Building relationships for effective ministry*. InterVarsity Press, 1993.

[2] Hooks, Bell., "Teaching critical thinking: Practical wisdom." (No Title) (2010).

The purpose of this to guide MSMBC and to help Black Churches in a direction to think about actions, with a new vision. It is mandated by God that we should love our neighbors, and this requires the application of love, power and justice. Paul Tillich stated that "there is an intrinsic problem of love, power and justice, one cannot work constructively in the theology or philosophy without constituting the subject of these lectures, love and justice."[3] This project addresses the Biblical requirements to love, and the consequence of its absence creates sinful problems, and confusion in the Black Churches. Its application provides methodologies that require each participant to be open to change, challenges, and contentions by rethinking the practical theology of Christian Education through critical thinking.

I am a product of the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties. I spent my formative years at Saint Stephens African Methodist Episcopal Black Church. There, my values developed around God and civil rights for all humanity. I was influenced by the guiding principles that working together for a common cause with love and peace could change society. A preacher's son, raised in a matriarchal home full of spiritual women, I learned to respect females, family, and all people. However, the environment outside of my home adhered to different values, thus it presented with exclusions, especially gays. My lack of knowledge about LGBTQIA+ was because I did not understand the theology of differences and my prejudices and discrimination towards gay people was based upon my own biases. My environment dictated that boys played sports; organized sports for girls were limited or nonexistent. Females were expected to learn Home Economics. This notion that girls were incapable of participating in sports was senseless; my mother was a capable basketball player and athlete in the 1950's. Whenever I observed a

[3] Tillich, Paul., Love, power, and justice: Ontological analyses and ethical applications. vol 38. Oxford University Press, USA, 19564

boy behaving like a girl, he became a target of my ignorance. Likewise, for a girl who participated in male-defined activities, I simply labeled her a "Tomboy."

Typically, the boys of my generation ignored females who attempted to engage our domain, and we simply did not allow it. As I matured, I decided to study biology and genetics. As my knowledge in these subjects increased, I began to contemplate the possibility of that, people are gay at birth, turnout, or just different. The news media outlet Christian Headlines pondered the same question by asking the question, are people "Born Gay?"[4] On June 1, 2011, A Parent's Guide, by Chuck Colson, Breakpoint, provided a different point of view. Breakpoint shared, "It was splashed across every major newspaper. Homosexuality may be linked to genes, the headlines screamed. A new study shows that homosexuality often runs in families—and hence might be related to genetic factors."[5] Conversely, Tyler O'Neil's research at John Hopkins University indicated, "No Evidence People Are Born Gay or Transgender,"[6] However, the Guardian reported, "Gay genes: science is on the right track, we're born this way. Let's deal with it. Could it be both scientific and a choice to be Gay based on environment and physiology?"[7] A more recent study reported on the advocate.com offers "16 Scientific Studies Proving We're Born This Way" by Jacob Ogles, 01/04/18."[8] This presents additional insight for Black Churches to consider. Interestingly, although my opinion has not been sought, I will reveal that I believe it is both, that some humans are born gay, and some choose to live an alternative lifestyle. What evolves in your own intellectual space is between you and your God.

[4] https://www.christianheadlines.com/

[5] https://breakpoint.org/gay-genes/

[6] https://pjmedia.com/tyler-o-neil/2016/08/23/johns-hopkins-research-no-evidence-people-are-born-gay-or-transgender-n47658

[7] https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2015/jul/24/gay-genes-science-is-on-the-right-track-were-born-this-way-lets-deal-with-it

[8] https://www.advocate.com/health/2018/1/04/16-scientific-studies-proving-were-born-way#rebelltitem1

So, this begs the question, how do Black Churches address this critical issue, as well as matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Further, how does the church change its traditional Christian Education practices and how are these revised practices consolidated into its mainstream values to promote a sense of belonging regardless of age, sexual orientation, or ethnicity? The Black Church must be in lockstep with its beliefs and practices; it must advocate and provide positive and meaningful outcomes that ensure equal justice for all as mandated by the Constitution of the United States and the Word of God. This requires a shift of practical theology through Christian education that has centuries of embedded theological preferences, ideologies, methods, polity, and social exclusion. A component of the premise of this project states that Black Churches must rethink their traditional theology of Christian Education and come to terms with the influence of social media, discrimination, misinterpretation of God's Word, Right-wing theological influences, and ignorance in its pews and pulpits. God's Word in Hosea 4:5 NRSV) reveals that *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*" [9] This has serious implications for Black Churches. This project intends to provide knowledge, methods and scriptural support that enables change in theological perspectives and illustrates the need to liberate the Black Church from its single focus as culturally Afro-centric. And while I confess that I love my African ancestry *and* the Black Church, we must not continue to be narrow in our vision; we must, therefore, support diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging and implement practices, methodologies and processes in our traditional Biblical canons. To ensure success (sustainability), these target

[9] New Revised Standard Bible, Hosea 4.5

groups must be part of the design, build, and implementation of the changes; they must become equal partners with the church, as change agents if we expect to meet our objective to redeem the souls of America.

The Black Church's application of the Word of God as it relates to age, sexual orientation and race must be indisputable and unapologetic. This dissertation will propose that the intersection of age, sexual orientation and race comprises a constructive theological approach that requires rethinking and assists the transformation of the Black Churches through Christian Education. Coupled with diversity, inclusiveness, and social justice that informs church culture, this program will generate a curriculum that supports the dichotomy and pedagogical shift of traditional theology.

Although the Black Church has a long and impressive history of addressing social justice, we beg the question, have Black Churches been genuine in promoting the values it applauds? Has the Black Church properly addressed church polity, womanist theology, homophobia, transphobia, or its internal xenophobia? Did the X, Y, Z, and Millennial generations leave Black Churches because they were ignored? Has Sunday School literature been revised to display pictures that represent their intent to become transformative on issues of age, sexual orientation and race? Has Sunday School literature intentionally and consistently contained data that indicates its support about multiculturalism and social justice issues?

When I perused the catalog published by Sunday School Publishing Board of the National Baptist Convention, I was unable to locate an entry about diversity and multiculturalism. While continuing my research at the Urban Ministries (UMI), I discovered God from a Biblical perspective. How will we change and manage the culture of Black diversity and inclusion,

a book entitled One Big Heart and Mentoring for Life. It was interesting to note the absence of a curriculum for age, sexual orientation and race. This omission led me to ponder if this gap signals ignorance, economics or reluctance to face real issues that are still prohibited by social or religious custom. Do these exclusions perpetrate a fraud of the Word of Churches when we are unwilling to address even the internal social justice issues we face daily. What you will find in this demonstration project are hard questions and graphic representations of what the X, Y, and Z generations are saying to the Black Churches and to the world.

This demonstration project will not attempt to address any of the phobias described above, we recognize as a spirit that is not of a "rational spirit." We reference the rational spirit that Dr. W. E. B. DuBois penned. Then, Zora Neal Hurston wrote about the existence of a "sanctified spirit," that alludes to the religious practices and beliefs of African American churches that emphasized the importance of sanctification and the experience of the Holy Spirit, (becoming holy or set apart for God's special use and purpose). So, are Black Churches allowing the Holy Spirit to use them in a way that covers these issues? In his works, Howard Thurman presented the idea of a "mystical spirit" or pneumatology that is the same as the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit showed up and established the New Testament Church. The New Testament Church in Acts 2 was diverse, inclusive, intercultural and intergenerational and, thus, represented a model for Christians to follow. Are Black Churches utilizing all the available resources and tools that allow the Holy Spirit to lead, guide and direct their polity and paths?

In summary, Black Churches that are diverse, inclusive, and proponents of social justice must rethink its pragmatic theology of Christian Education and focus on providing solutions that address the unique and collective concerns of diverse generations regardless of age,

sexual orientation and race. Moreover, the Black church must revisit its past history that served as the center of strength and arbiter of social justice issues. It must then adjust its strategies and methodologies to accommodate current issues that lead to viable and sustainable solutions. Pew Research states, "No longer the new kids on the block, Millennials have moved firmly into their 20s and 30s, and a new generation is coming into focus. Generation Z is diverse and on track to be the most well-educated generation yet – is moving toward adulthood with a liberal set of attitudes and an openness to emerging social trends."[10] How did I arrive at this conclusion? It began with an in-depth examination of MSMBC, my own activism as a youth, and my formal academic training in social science, specifically history. I believe that the Black Church must connect with its history, authentically, to achieve success in dealing with social justice. "First history is a set of stories we tell in order to understand better who we are, and the word we are now in;..."[11]

a. The Problem - The Black Church Beginning

Many would argue that Christianity emerged among slaves in the colonies of America as part of the Age of Discovery (exploration) in the early 15th century to the 17th Century. European nations pursued conquest, exploitation and exploration around the world. They marketed Christianity as a brand for much of the exploration and exploitation they achieved. This Trans-Atlantic journey from Africa to the various parts of European controlled lands, brought ships filled with slaves that dropped their anchors in the Americas. My formal training

[10] https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/01/17/generation-z-looks-a-lot-like-millennials-on-key-social-and-political-issues/

[11] Williams, Rowan. *Why study the past?: The quest for the Historical Church*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2005. Page 2

in history, holding an undergraduate degree from University of Maryland, West Germany, has informed me that Africans' arrival in the United States occurred prior to 1619. This is further evidenced below as exposed in the re-examination of Christopher Columbus' expeditions.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. published, October 22, 2012 in (***The Root***) - ***Amazing Facts About the Negro No. 2:, "***However, let's set the record straight as to who were the first Africans to arrive in the Americas. Juan Garrido was born in West Africa around 1480. According to the historians, Ricardo Alegria and Jane Landers, Garrido's notarized "*probanza*" (his curriculum vitae, more or less), dated 1538, says he moved from Africa to Lisbon, Portugal, of his own volition as a free man, stayed in Spain for seven years, and then, seeking his fortune and perhaps a bit of fame, he joined the earliest conquistadors to the New World." In addition, Pero Alonso Nino 1492-1505, was a navigator and explorer of African ancestry who traveled with Christopher Columbus' first expedition to the New World in 1492, known as "El Negro."[12] El Negro was a free man, not a slave. "The first instance of African slave labor was introduced to the United States in late 1526 on the North Carolina coast as part of the Lucas Vazquez Allyon Spanish expedition to establish a European Colony."[13] The colony did not survive, and the African slaves saw an opportunity to gain their freedom and, thus, fled to the interior and settled among the local Indian (Native Americans) populations. It is recorded that this act was the first slave rebellion in North America. Why is this important to this study? It is important because it establishes a reality check and a confirmation of misinformation, documented in Euro-centric media, that Africans did not know God as refuted by Elizabeth Ofosuah Johnson, a Ghanaian staff writer, who penned on November 02, 2018, "Africans have worshiped God and Africans

[12] legacysunfoldingjourney.blogspot.com

[13] https://www.legendsofamerica.com/lucas-vazquez-de-ayllon/

had their own form of worship and religion before the Europeans discovered the continent and felt it necessary to introduce Christianity, through which they claimed to show Africans the "one true God."[14]

Throughout history, long before their contact with the Europeans, Africans were acknowledged as having worshiped God. In what is known, currently, as African traditional worship and practice, the name of God was translated into many African languages. Not only did they have a name for God, but they also believed in him and other lesser gods, many of which existed before Greek mythology and the introduction of Christianity into Africa. However, during the age of discovery, the world changed.

During the Age of Discovery, the early modern period when European nations voyaged around the world in exploration and exploitation, the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade, which is responsible for the introduction of African enslavement into the Americas, was active and thriving. "In late August 1619, 20 - 30 enslaved Africans landed at Point Comfort, today's Fort Monroe in Hampton, VA, aboard the English privateer ship White Lion."[15] Slave culture and religion moved with the captives across the Atlantic Ocean. Even though Christianity was notable in the colonies, it was prominent in Africa long before slaves were converted to "Ethiopia."[16] Rev. Dr. Tim McDonald emphasized that, "God and racism created the Black Church, but the Black Church must "redeem the soul of America."[17]

Clementine Hunter, born into a creole family, a descendent of slavery, states in an Ebony Magazine article, "long before colonialism and slavery, Africans were practicing Christian

[14] https://face2faceafrica.com/author/ejohnson

[15] https://hampton.gov/3580/The-1619-Landing-Report-FAQs

[16] https://apworldipedia.com/index.php/Topic_1.5_State_Building_in_Africa

[17] Fairclough, Adam. *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr*. University of Georgia Press, 2001, Book

Christianity."[18] We know that Christianity has had a long history in Africa, pre-dating any kind of European influence,' Mamiya shares. Historically, "Christianity arrived in North Africa in the later part of the 1st century and/or early part of the 2nd century, while the adoption of Christianity in Ethiopia dates to the fourth century." The Bible, in support of these assertions, reveals an Ethiopian eunuch's conversion as the early church was forming. Likewise, Moroccan explorer Ibn Battuta mentions Christians in Nubia."[19] So, long before colonialism and slavery, Africans were practicing some form of Christianity. As we rethink the traditional theology of Christian Education, it is important to tell the truth, to reveal that it will eliminate the popular assaults on Black History in Florida. Generations X, Y and Z revealed that truth is very important to their set of values.

Christianity was esteemed in the colonies because many settlers arrived with long held beliefs that were acquired and developed through association with the Church of England. Christians justified the exploitation of the enslaved because of their perception about how Africans perceived the Catholic faith, i.e., their unwillingness to convert to Catholicism, thus, they were not worthy of their humanity or freedom. I believe that slavery is deeply rooted in Christian history and should not be ignored as we seek to understand and as we move toward progress in our churches. Black Churches must not glamorize, nor ignore, how religion was exploited to gain control of this segment of the population. Just recently, the Florida Department of Education, under the authority of Governor Ron DeSantis stated, "Slaves benefited from slavery."[20] Representing this concept in Florida's History curriculum perpetuates an absolute

[18] https://www.ebony.com/christianitys-african-roots-450

[19] Ibid

[20] https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/floridas-new-history-standard-blow-our-students-and-nation

lie. Black Churches must use all available means to rebut this lie; Black people are entitled to the truth. Africans were taken by force from their homeland, their culture, and were raped, mutilated and dehumanized as they navigated the voyage to the places where they would become servants to their captors. They came from diverse religious faiths and cultural backgrounds. "The lineage tree of Afro-American religion is rooted in the culture and traditional Africa. Africans were religious people long before encountering European slavers and Christian missionaries."[21] Their captives were subjected into a life of servitude; they had little tolerance for religious participation or fellowship. Moreover, they were not recipients of religious documentation because slave owners believed it was not advisable nor beneficial for slaves to learn to read, and thus continue their religious practices. Despite this, the enslaved formed a faith culture based on spoken language and memorization bringing the oral tradition of the Griots practiced by their African ancestors. This was the platform upon which the African community assembled for Christian worship that eventually led to the establishment of "The Black Church."[22] And, the Church was the central venue for Blacks to convene around discussions about faith and to provide support to goals for a better future. MSMBC of Jacksonville, Florida champions the same goals. MSMBC, in its humble beginnings, adopted its own operating theology through the delivery of Christian Education which led to a deeper understanding of God. It also led to a better sense of the history of the Black Church, including its flaws and failures. Since its establishment in 1908, MSMBC continues to have its flaws and failures. Therefore, pursuing a more in-depth examination of the history of Black Churches will

[21] Sernett, Milton C., Afro-American Religious History, A Documentary Witness, Duke University Press, Durham, NC 1985. Page 13

[22] The term "the black church" evolved from the phrase "the Negro church," the title of a pioneering sociological study of African American Protestant churches at the turn of the century by W.E.B. Du Bois.

help us to gain a better understanding of why revising traditional theology through Christian Education, that incorporates a multicultural and social justice approach is important to X, Y, Z and Millennial generations.

b. **The Problem - The Black Church in America**

At the onset of the 19th century, and throughout the Second Great Awakening, the Black Church underwent a major transformation, even though God ordained Churches. before creation. In reality, the story of the Ethiopian Eunuin, the book about the gospel, dates back to Africa long before Christianity arrived in America. The Great Awakening in the 1700's was a period of history where Baptists and Methodists in the South preached to slaveholders and slaves alike in the First Great Awakening. Preaching was also teaching and thus, Christian education was delivered orally. Andrew Bryan, the founder of Bryan Street African Baptist Church, wrote a letter from the Negro Baptist Church in Savannah GA addressed to the Rev. Dr. Rippon another pastor on December 23, 1800. "Another dispensation of Providence has greatly strengthened our hands…, to exercise the handsome ministerial gifts he possesses amongst us and teach our youth to read and write."[23] This is a form of practical Christian Education that must be continued in the 21st century. A spiritual awakening and the religious revival in America brought on by widespread preaching and many reform movements unified citizens and significantly boosted church growth. The Black Church will not grow in the absence of discipleship between youth and young adults. The Awakening was a comforting movement in the midst of socio-political changes, and it brought a number of converts to new Protestant denominations, both slave-owners and slaves. The Black Churches of the 21st

[23] Sernett, Milton C., Afro-American Religious History, A Documentary Witness, Duke University Press, Durham, NC., pg. 49

century need a new awakening that will arm against the New Jim Crow and discriminatory legislation on human rights, a major concern of Generations X, Y and Zers. The story does not stop here, because Black Churches have a history of failure to embrace diversity and inclusiveness.

To continue, slaveholders and enslaved Africans in the South attended segregated church services that were led primarily by white Baptist and Methodist pastors. This practice continues in churches today; segregated churches still exist, and this must change. Segregation in churches brought about a change in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania when Richard Allen and Absalom Jones became influential authority figures for the Black Church when they organized the Free African Society of Philadelphia. The church eventually split into two historical congregations, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, in current society, churches are still splitting, and this compromises the churches testimony to the world. The first 'brick and mortar churches designated for free and enslaved Africans were opened in Philadelphia, and today, there leaves no justifications for the Black Church to remain *status quo;* Black churches must change current theological approaches to society. The congregations that formed in Philadelphia welcomed Africans and other cultures as members and pastors, and their attendance numbers increased steadily as a result. It must be noted that, initially, "the first Black woman preacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church by the name of Jareana Lee (1783-1884) who also published the first autobiography."[24]

Sexism was still evident even then - although she was licensed to preach, she was never

[24] thegrio.com

ordained by the founding Bishop Richard Allen. Candice Marie Benbow, Multi Genre Theologian, author of #RedLipTheology, Beauty, Faith, Feminism, Culture, Gender Equality (she/her) on March 8, 2022 stated it well, "Black women remain the heartbeat of the Black church, they are clergywomen and change-makers revolutionizing faith."[25] The success and popularity of Black churches in Philadelphia, credited with the women's influence, inspired the construction of a multitude of churches in other locations. Considering these noteworthy contributions, coupled with their attempt at inclusion brings to bear the question, are churches fully including females for complete involvement in the church in the 21st century? It is of note that, because of racism, discrimination, poverty and a need for hope, the Black Church did not just emerge, it emancipated people and the church to a better life and conditions. These historical facts are important for amplifying and revising traditional theology through Christian Education.

I interviewed Dr. Tim McDonald of Concord Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia who is Board Chair of People for the American Way to gain his views on diversity in the Black Church. He shared, "diversity is not a bad thing, and the Black Churches must save the soul of America." How can we be diverse and inclusive Black Churches and simultaneously exclude others because of age, sexual orientation and race? I believe that training Black Churches to become diverse, inclusive, and multicultural, now, is tantamount to their survival through the lenses of social justice. This will require training congregations to become more diverse and inclusive in discipleship, leadership, and social justice through Christian Education, and adherence to the Word of God. "It was very good, after the completion of creation, God looked around, saw a

[25] https://thegrio.com/2022/03/08/black-women-preachers-who-changed-history/

vast array of diversity in all he had created and declared it 'very good' (Gen 1.31)."[26] God created a mosaic then and God is still present today! The Black Churches must not have a narrow-minded view of God's grace and the Chrisitan faith. In a review of the Paul-Gordon Chandler book *"God's Global Mosaic"* the Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey stated, "My ministry has shown me just how insular we "first world" Christians can be. With his wonderful vision of the global Church, Paul-Gordon Chandler has written a book that brings its glorious diversity and riches to life. I warmly commend it as an encouragement and a challenge to us all."[27]

The word of God is inclusive of age, sexual orientation and race. Why, then, do the Black Churches struggle with diverse and inclusive theology? It is a theology the Black Churches should adopt as a methodology that will help Millennials, X, Y, and Z generations return to the Black churches. It is through rethinking the practical theology of Christian Education; the Black church can become better educated on diversity, inclusiveness and intercultural congregations through social justice when the church addresses age, sexual orientation and race, which can lead to further emancipation of humanity. We can learn from other Christians around the world that God is a Mosaic God who is inclusive of all humanity. Therefore, the Black churches need more than just emancipation from slavery but also emancipation from self!

c. The Problem - Emancipation of The Black Church

When the Black Church became officially established in the United States, it began to craft its identity in numerous communities, but it was not entirely widespread nor accepted in its

[26] Elmeer Duane., Cross-Cultural Conflict, Building Relationships for Effective Ministry, Intra-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515, pg.23

[27] Chandler, Paul-Gordon. *God's Global Mosaic: What We Can Learn from Christians Around the World*. InterVarsity Press, 2000.

early beginnings. The invisible, powerful, and prevalent institution remained pervasive across the country in areas where organized church options were not available. Thus, they met secretly in secluded places to share their experiences. They also shared accounts of activities in white churches, such as biblical stories, baptisms, or sermons white preachers delivered. "For many slaveholders, this outlook not only made evangelical Christianity more palatable, but also provided a strong argument for converting slaves and establishing biracial churches. Even so, with much of the religious life of the slave community existing as an invisible institution, beyond the purview of whites are formal churches, white control over African American religious practices and spiritual beliefs were limited."[28]

These gatherings were significant to the design and building of The Black Church because they set the precedent for the information flow in future physical churches. It also set a culture of profound synergies amongst attendees since these meetings were a private, small group of people deeply dedicated to growing their faith. These alliances and and the pursuit of God continues as guiding principles in The Black Church in the 21st century.

A measurable amount of progress was evident in America as enslaved preachers continued to assume important roles in the early formation of the "Black church." As such, they joined secretive meetings in which they were able to preach. It is interesting to note that some chose to recite scripture from the Holy Bible that suggested that they supported reinforcement and justification of slavery. In their delivery, the sermonizers signified that slaves should be obedient to their masters. Frequently, they channeled Moses liberating the Israelites because it was empathetic, thus, conveyed similar results for their situation. The enslaved Africans

[28] https://www.thirteen.org/wnet/slavery/experience/religion/history2.html

translated these bible stories into inspirational and hope-filled songs; they began to genuinely embrace the gospel even though their outlook for the future was mainly symbolic. They were "seeking rest for the justice seeking soul."[29] Because they did not have access to organized educational institutions, the church (Christianity) provided hope and the foundation upon which they designed their lifestyles. Cleverly, they exploited the information that accumulated in the church to build a communication stream through which they began to have conversations about their freedom. The foundations and platforms that were erected during this era have remained in Black Church practices to this day. However, the Black Church is not the only place of resistance, education and organizing among black liberals. For decades, the *movement*, in its many forms, has been carefully architected, and has been identified and encouraged to support intergenerational and multicultural segments.

The enduring impacts of early United States customs assists our understanding of the significant and essential roles the Black Church assumed then and endures to this day. The current difficulties are testaments that the Black Church, in the face of these new challenges, has held fast to its traditional practices, thus, has not faced, nor addressed these areas that will allow emancipation from Euro-centric and heedless polity. Unfortunately, racism still exists, and Black churches must not be in states of denial or avoidance. Fundamental to all these problems is the currently perceived post-racial world because "...the new interactions of people of all colors easily and confidently working together, sharing neighborhoods, and intermarrying."[30] How will Black Churches address this issue of multicultural and interracial children without

[29] Smith-Williams, Susan K. Rest for the Justice Seeking Soul, Whitaker House, 1030 Valley Circle, New Kensington, PA 15068

[30] Smith, R. Drew, William Ackah, Anthony G. Reddie, and Rothney S. Tshaka, eds. *Contesting post-racialism: Conflicted churches in the United States and South Africa*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2015.

being diverse and inclusive. Are Black Churches limited in ways that have not been explored or validated? MSMBS recognized that it was subject to boundaries/limits, and we recognized the need to change our approach to church(ing), but how?

This is a pictorial depiction of the historical Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church-MSMBC from May 1908 until the present. We have been harried, but not hemmed in, as revealed in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 at Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church (MSMBC from here forth).

d. The Problem - From the Past to the Future

One of the declaratives, essential, character, and circumstances of ministry scriptures in the Bible is 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 which infers that leaders in the ministry suffer both mentally and physically as a result of the task of ministry. A church is both an organism and an organization that places its pastors in a dual role and obligation to manage both the worship service (organism) and the administration of the church (organization). Dr. Paul L. Brown Sr. emphasizes in his book, "Stress and the Pulpit", that "stress is everywhere."[31] We characterize both the leader and the church to be harried but not hemmed in. In the NRSV, 2 Corinthians 4.8-9 reveals, "We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed." Church leaders that are hemmed impact the church spiritually and/or physically**.** However, when churches and pastors are harried, they must rethink their personal and traditional theology which requires a heart, mind and soul transformation. The battle takes place between the ears. Paul wrote in Romans 12.1- 2, "be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of the *mind* "to begin a new life in Christ. How can we transform a church into a New Testament, diverse,

[31] Brown, Paul L. Sr., Stress In the Pulpit,

inclusive, multicultural church that addresses social justice without rethinking how we exist as a church in Christ? To wit, let's consider a caterpillar's metamorphosis process.

Caterpillars are not always beautiful to look upon. However, when they develop inside their Chrysalis (Pupa), they transform into a beautiful butterfly and continue their life cycle. Inside the Chrysalis, the closed transformation process is rigorous, isolated, and assaulted within the cocoon. The job of the caterpillar is to eat persistently, which is metaphorically the job of born-again believers who should "eat" God's words. Yet another illustration is found in Paul's directive to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4.6, "If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed." Therefore, even when we are afflicted in every way, persecuted, perplexed, and cast down, God is transforming us for His good works through Christ. In the twenty-first century church these repetitions of words must be applicable in ministry. Paul uses these words in phrases in 2 Corinthians 4.-9 to effectively and efficiently communicate that, when faced with these difficulties, we must proclaim Jesus Christ. To proclaim Jesus Christ, therefore, we must rethink our traditional theology to enable transformation, thus the renewing of minds. Eyes have not seen, ears have not heard how much better God's church will be if we become more diverse, inclusive, multicultural as we address the social justice issues that change communities. MSMBC is a church that required transformation from the pulpit to the pews.

MSMBC is in Jacksonville, Florida, one of the most racist cities in the South. Jacksonville is ranked 71 out 110 in the United Stated in a study by belonging.berkeley.edu. Just a few of many narratives and optics justify these statistics: On October 30, 2022, antisemitic messages were

shown at the Florida-Georgia game www.CNN.com. In January 2020, EEOC Jacksonville Plumbers and Pipefitters were found to be discriminatory against Blacks. In February 2019, the Jacksonville Association of Firefighters Local 122, paid 4.9 million to settle a race discrimination lawsuit. Jacksonville Police, under fire for racist jaywalking enforcement, https://usa.streetblog.org. Racism quickly becomes an issue in Florida's governor's race, Kristen Cosby, Reporter News4Jax, August 29, 2018. Jacksonville Sheriff Admits Race May Have Played a Role in Ticket Writing, Propublica.org. Race and segregation have been an issue in Jacksonville for decades. They fly confederate flags and worship confederate monuments which have been the centerpiece of community activism even after school Confederate names were changed. To appease the demonstrators, the mayor removed the statue that was in the middle of downtown at Hemming Park. Hemming was a confederate soldier whose statue was placed in the park as a symbolic gesture to represent the land that was donated to the city by Hemmings' Family.

Confederate Park, approximately one mile from Hemming Park, boasts sidewalks constructed in the shape of a confederate flag accompanied by a daughters of Confederacy statue. The park itself is in Historic Springfield, which is also the location of our church. MSMBC is situated within two miles of downtown and 1.5 miles from Confederate Park. There was a period in which African Americans were not allowed to live in or even walk through Springfield. It is now gentrified and multicultural and, upon the removal of the Hemming Park statue, the park was renamed James Weldon Johnson Park. The Daughters of Confederacy statue was removed later December 27, 2023.

Jacksonville is approximately 30 miles south of the South Georgia border. Many Georgia

residents work in the Jacksonville Metropolitan area; they bring their culture across the state line incorporating its characteristics in their workplaces. Another Florida city, St. Augustine, is 30 miles south of Jacksonville and has a long history of segregation and extreme racism that survives the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's tenure. The Southern Poverty Law Center and the Federal Bureau of Investigation have confirmed reports in the NE Region of Florida that 52 hate groups exist in Florida and as of February 28, 2023, a Constitutional Sheriffs Chief ran an online radio station featuring White Supremacists.

In Jacksonville alone, there are five known hate groups. Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, an American civil rights activist in Birmingham Alabama once told me, "Pastor Gundy, Jacksonville is the last Birmingham of the South, and it needs to be treated that way." Our geographical location is populated by many migrants from Northern cities; if MSMBC and other Black Churches hopes to survive these changes that are occurring in historic Springfield and Jacksonville, they must change the way they conduct church business. Our community and city must be subject to the scrutiny of systemic racism; our charge is to confront issues through biblically mandated instructions.

It is my belief, and certainly not from an egotistical place, rather from a Biblical perspective, i.e.., the Bible reveals in Proverbs 3.5, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight," thus, we must allow the Bible to be our source and reference in all things. And we must promote Christian education as an essential approach that informs not just the Black church but all churches about finding solutions for social justice issues.

The defining moment in this dissertation is to challenge the Black Churches in Jacksonville, and America in light of the systemic racism above to do as God requires of the Black Church

which is more than discerning, confessing, witnessing and faithful church attendees. This defining moment in history provides a purpose that is revealed in Jeremiah 34.15-17 as it relates to the treacherous treatment of slaves and the requirements to treat them correctly. The Black Church must not be a hindrance but a liberator of the marginalized. The educational, including religious based institutions have offered courses that were loosely developed yielding limited relevant outputs, "courses and programs were developed without thought and careful planning needed to make them educationally sound."[32] Again, this confirms that the Black Church must re-engineer its traditional theological models and assess their implications for today's culture. Does the Black Church's Christian education component provide options, directions and, finally, solutions that open paths to diversity, inclusiveness, and the social justice elements of age, sexual orientation and race that inevitably contribute to saving the souls of the "Right (wrong) Wing Evangelicals in America? The answer is a resounding yes! It must be accomplished by gaining a better understanding derived from rational and critical thinking, assessment of culture, education, history, theological reflection, and the application of pragmatic Christian educational theology. This requires moral leadership, public advocacy and a close look at each church and the local community it serves. In this paper, the local exegesis case study is MSMBC Jacksonville, Florida and a proposed method to overcome past failures.

In view of the responsibility of local leaders to help shape and facilitate culture for the advancement of human rights, I have chosen to provide my articulation, implementation and stewardship based upon a local exegesis of Jacksonville Florida. The African American church must change its approach to practical theology in Christian Education, as we have at MSMBC,

[32] Banks, James A., and Cherry A. McGee Banks, eds. *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. John Wiley & Sons, 2019. Pg. 5

that includes conducting a transparent and sincere examination of their local community through the lenses of an in-depth exegesis. The questions that must be asked, who we are, what we are doing, how are we doing it, and what we can do to improve diversity, inclusiveness, intercultural and social justice of age, sexual orientation that is truthful. Our church has assumed a communal vision of our local church in Jacksonville. It began with a survey of who we are now and who we want to become for God in our local community of Springfield in Jacksonville, Florida. How?

MSMBC and I conducted a study referencing the book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* by Thom S. Rainer. The church conducted several surveys, assessed its demographics while focusing on age as a key component. So, targeting gentrification, we rewrote our vision and mission to address the local and global world we serve. Our vision statement "A Local Church with a Global view." This view is mosaic and inclusive to meet not just the local needs, rather, the virtual global world we now serve. We began these efforts to change pre-pandemic, this made our transition virtually much easier for MSMBC than some other churches. Our mission however, stayed the same, "To impact lives through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit." How? Our objectives and goals through Christian Education became fluid to accomplish our mission by impacting lives educationally, economically, politically, socially, and spiritually through a multicultural and intergenerational social justice application that includes age, sexual orientation and race. An equation formula of reality over our expectations provides a summation of love for all of humanity. We concluded that the practical application of inclusiveness of all humanity regardless of race, color, creed, gender identity can be accomplished only through the grace of acceptance of age, sexual orientation and race. This is a different approach for a

predominantly "Black Church," because it is a desire to expand our mission to be diverse, inclusive, intercultural and intergenerational while addressing social justice issues. Addressing social justice issues is not a new initiative for MSMBC, but this intentional intercultural approach to practical theology is! We found our basis for this new approach in the Word of God which will be addressed later in the local exegesis of moral leadership, public advocacy and intersectionality. This required a re-examination of the conventional theology of Christian Education at MSMBC and our local non-profit First Coast Leadership Foundation. Our love for humanity dictated that we address the marginalized and intersections from both local and global perspectives. We have convened local community and coalition members and directed their efforts to social justice issues in Jacksonville. We targeted healthcare, confederate monuments, voter registration, voter suppression, local and federal redistricting, toxic waste sites, death penalty, police brutality and inequity in the judicial system. A sampling of the social justice issues is identified below. Allow me to share our goals from a global perspective, then adjust the scope of our work to home in Jacksonville, Florida.

Where is the Theo-ethical and inter-relational theology that disrupted the problem? Where is the intersection of interconnectedness? What Christian pedagogy exist to teach and train congregations in the areas we targeted? Intersectional and geo-political implications regarding theology and social justice are interrelated locally and globally and must be normalized globally. Bar none, unarguably, the best tool for the church is to argue the case to re-examine traditional theology of Christian Education. It mimics the "Invisible Institution"[33] the enslaved South used to accomplish its gains that propelled it to higher prominence. We must endeavor to

[33] Banks, James A., and Cherry A. McGee Banks, eds. *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. John Wiley & Sons, 2019. Page 1

change the welfare of people in communities where we live and thrive. We must change public policies to properly address unfair legalized economic, educational, political, social, and spiritual forces. Where is the power to address and overcome these obstacles through Christian Education? The power exists in the Word of God!

What does the word of God say about public policy? Since God speaks to the people of God, and not to the public at large, in Romans 13.1-7, it instructs people to be subject to governing authorities because they have been instituted by God. Without taking a far reach or hermeneutical exegete, it is true that government is instituted by God and government makes policy, yet does God expect the policy to be rendered equally and fairly based upon love? Paul Tillich states, "Agape is love cutting into love, just as revelation is reason cutting into reason and the Word of God is the Word cutting into all words."[34]

Public policy has epistemological and ontological implications and practices that require reevaluation. Social practitioners, those who propose policy changes that are not inclusive of all of humanity need social justice practitioners that will disrupt bad policies because they are intersectional. It becomes a moral and ethical mandate that all humans are equal and should be treated equally. This equal treatment must be expanded to include the Black church because the Black Church has the moral power of God to change the conditions of their community and America. The practice of this inclusion must be derived from, taught and demonstrated in the church through Christian education and preached from the pulpit to support the teaching of God. This training that is delivered in the churches must support the efforts to reverse systemic racism and inequalities locally, regionally, nationally and globally. How can this be achieved in

[34] Tillich, Paul., Love, Power, and Justice, Ontological analysis and ethical applications, Oxford Press, Inc. London, 1954, pg. 33

the 21st century in the Black church?

If we support equality within a plural society, we must amplify our prophetic voices (particularly black prophetic voices), not lower them as power for change. In 2017, Andrew Sullivan, the journalist asked, "Is Intersectionality a Religion?" Intersectionality (also known as intersection theory or, in more narrow usage, intersectional feminism) is the concept that subjectivity (i.e., that which influences, and informs people's judgments about truth or reality) is formed by mutually interlocking and reinforcing categories of race, gender, class, health, and sexuality."[35] I do not defend Sullivan's 1994 statement on race in IQ in 1994, but here he has a question that must be answered. The Black theologians must be prepared to address oppression, power and resistance as an intersectional model that is inclusive and diversified.

American Evangelicals, whom Black social Justice workers refer to as right-wing evangelicals are in strong opposition to these theories and the corresponding application of the theology. However, if the Black Church ignores or refutes these important theological issues, we fail God's mandate to love our neighbor. Love is power from God. Although not generally supported, Christian education is the best possible course of action that we can use to convey the messages and bridge the gaps around intersectional, age, sexual orientation and race. Christian education properly exegeses and exercises apart from tradition is a powerful change agent. The Black Church must avoid mis, mal, and disinformation if we are to attract different generations and cultures to our churches. Who are we countering in the theological arena of God?

Right Wing evangelicals, extreme conservative politicians, and white supremacists use

[35] Sullivan, Andrew, Is Intersectionality a Religion? Journalist, blogger, public intellectual, and media commentator, Catholic and gay. Intelligencer, Interesting Times, March 10, 2012

ontological arguments to spread misinformation, mal-information, and disinformation locally and globally to ensure the perpetuation of capitalist colonial power. Simply stated, intersectional actions reveal forms of systematic oppression at all levels of society, locally and globally. This is exemplified in white males, and other males who mistreat children, women, and impoverished people in society. Changing their intentions will require disruptive theological thoughts and practices especially as it relates to black women in churches and society. Christian education that is taught from God's word creates space for age, sexual orientation, race and the use of an intersectional model for change which must address feminism.

Kimberle Crenshaw, an American law professor who coined the term in 1989, explained Intersectional feminism as "a prism for seeing the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other. When we broaden this beyond intersectional feminism and open our minds to structural racism globally, her work and article "*Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*," which was published in the University of Chicago Legal Forum in 1989 is extremely important. Why? Kimberly Crenshaw "describes intersectionality as a bias and violence against black women." Others may use intersectionality in other ways, but the original interpretation was about black women. How does the Black Church address this violence in the churches?

It requires a theological look at Christians who sin and the church that condones practices which should not exist. The church must change its practical and traditional theology through Christian education to match the Word of God. God's word reveals to us that we are all

one in Christ, it is not exclusive to a specific religious organization, political group, gender or race. We are one in Christ. Dr. Crenshaw clarified how one's identity intersects with race and gender, causing some individuals to be invisible as subjects within the law. An example would be anti-racism laws that are written for black men and anti-sexism laws for white women but do not protect black women. This is clearly a form of discrimination and unfortunately, racist and sexist. Black churches must incorporate this in their agenda!

Anti-discrimination laws are obligated to protect all humanity therefore, we must not ignore this prism of Dr. Crenshaw, "we embrace sinful anti-Christ doctrine," when we choose discrimination practices against humanity. Our foundational principles of local exegesis at MSMBC are to be all-inclusive, ALL means ALL in our inter-connectedness with God. Thus, it becomes incumbent upon us to train our church to understand and adjust the cultural and policy changes that necessitate a holistic attitude and a strategic vision. We will use social justice pedagogy premises to train all members to synergize an age-appropriate curriculum for children and youth. Yes, curriculum. We will design and build flexible and scalable modules that we can share with and continue ongoing development and learning with other religious organizations. . We are not changing nor are we encouraging you to change the message of God's word but deliver through Christian education and preaching. What does interconnection mean about God and humanity?

Joe Carter (who) wrote in the Current Affairs article on March 29, 2017, "For Christians, one of the most valuable contributions of intersection theory is that it can help us recognize that various types of structural sin in our world (such as structural racism) which intersects in ways that produces a "multiplier effect," which can sometimes cause greater harm to individuals

caught within such intersections. This concept can help us to acknowledge and address the cultural complexity that arises from living in a sinful world." This articulates the premise for my project that diversity, inclusiveness, and intercultural congregations are essential to the Black Church. Further, it is essential to address the intersection and inequality of Black females in order to reverse structural racism in the world and discrimination in the invisible church. This insight must move us to a greater understanding and empathy for our neighbors who are caught up in "intersecting" sin structures. A closer examination of women in the Bible, Ruth and Naomi, intercultural aged women of color, who were poor and oppressed, illustrates that magnified their misery. Referencing from a local and global perspective yields intersection as a tool for good and evil. Much of this is interrelated because it has local, global, and political implications of Ruth, Naomi, and Obed that encompass past and current cultures.

Intersectionality can become an ideology, and it can be used to promote a transformational and flourishing approach to diversity and inclusion that leads to building a better community through the Black Churches. What can be a flourishing church can also be a sinful church when we use ideology that builds divisions and avoids truths. Therefore, as we augment Christian education to include these topics, we must provide simple and realistic illustrations that have relevance to the 21st century. This is the case in Jacksonville, Florida, where the daughters of Confederacy are cherished as an icon of racial supremacy. Springfield Florida is the hometown of MSMBC; a Confederate Park is located there also, on City property. (See Figure 1 below. We obtained permission to use this picture).

FIGURE ONE - CONFEDERATE PARK, SPRINGFIELD, JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

The oppressors (white males and females) have systematically promoted cause division in all five of the matrices that Crenshaw provided as personal, structural, political, representational, and theological towards the oppressed (almost all others), including separation among the groups who are victims. This is counter to the teachings of Jesus to love your neighbor as thyself and provides American Evangelicalism a platform to support the white male oppressor's systemic racism. To combat misinformation, Christian Education must, naturally, include the Word of God combined with empirical human experiences to support effective mentoring practices. These social issues have generated historical developments in our local exegesis and have global implications and is significantly considered in our Christian Education philosophy. Why has the Black Church chosen to disregard all of the information that is available? Admittedly, we have other church matters to attend to, yet, we continue to lose our younger generations in significant numbers, and we must provide platforms where they can speak without judgment, where we listen actively and, where we plan strategies collaboratively to enable a workable solution that will bring us together to fulfill a common purpose as God has

ordained.

We must conduct deep analyses of what the Gens X, Y, and Z are telling us about the black churches, and even when their opinions vary, all are important and deserve consideration. Their concerns fall into the following categories for which they label themselves as victims: economical, educational, environmental, and political systemic racism. The question must be asked, did the Black Church which, historically, was the focal point from which these issues were identified and for which solutions were planned strategically fail. Have these generations left the Black Church to pursue their own separate social justice methods? How do we attract them to return to the Black Churches?

e. The Purpose - The Research Questions and How to Attract Gen X, Y, Z and Millennials

The research questions for this project are not complex, they are not difficult and very pointed. This dissertation project wants to know, what will it take to attract Generations X, Y, Z, and Millennials to return to the Black Church? How do the Black Church Attract Gen X, Y, Zers and Millennials?

1. How should the Black Churches become more diverse, inclusive and multicultural to attract Generation X, Y, Z and Millennials?
2. What should the Black Church do to become relevant to Generations X, Y and Z?
3. What would you recommend we do to attract X, Y and Z generations for the churches to become more diverse and inclusive by addressing social justice issues?
4. What did the Black Churches or MSMBC do to cause young people to leave?

Rev. Brandon Harris stated, "this is revolutionary; black Churches normally do not

address diversity and inclusiveness from a multicultural perspective." Our purpose is to also attract different generations through a multicultural approach. This is one the practices in our local exegesis at Mount Sinai Baptist Church in historical Springfield because it has been gentrified with different cultures and generations. There is an urgency to revive MSMBC and other Black Churches in America around an authentic Kingdom Community of God. This must include leadership development, social justice training, engaging Millennials, X, Y, and Z generations, and explaining the urgency of the need in organized documented researched data and practical application through a curriculum. The initial indicators revealed there has been, and continues to be a lack of success to provide adequate training to Black Church leaders in Biblical Leadership and theological applications that apply to the Kingdom Community of God, as revealed in the Gospel of Mark. The first of the gospels was shared by FaithSearch Partners, who outlined six organizational principles from the Gospel of Mark. "Faith-based organizations are called to stand out to be different from other organizations in their industry, and therefore, leaders must live differently." Regarding the Black Church, leaders must engage in thinking outside the box. Jesus Christ woke up the world with revolutionary actions and revelatory thinking. A church's reputation in the community matters as Mark reveals to us in Mark 3.7-8 when Jesus departed with his disciples to the sea and a great multitude from Galilee followed him. People will come when they hear that leaders and churches are doing positive ministry in a community, otherwise there will be a decline in membership. If churches keep doing the same things, churches will get the same results. Make note that there were significant numbers from Judea consisting of a mixed population; they were diverse. They came from Jerusalem, which comprised a mixed Greek and Roman cultural influence, and they were interculturally married.

They came from Idumea: Greeks, Phoenicians, and Arabs as part of the Esau biblical family; this is a picture of diversity. The Book of Ephesians offers salvation through Christ to Jews and Gentiles, which is all-inclusive. A biblical and relevant way to reach younger generations "to turn around America's church is the only method the Bible recommends—discipleship, the best way to reach young adults is not by flashy programs, the best worship, or by dropping a denomination's name from the church title. The best way to reach young adults is by using the younger senior adults in your church."[36] We must explore who they are and how they can be used to turn our churches around. However, discipleship must be taught through Christian Education.

This inclusion does not eliminate cultures, leaders, races, or gender as part of reconciliation to God's family and our Christian identity. Christians must be inclusive; we are not allowed to exclude any segment of humanity. In the Gospel of Mark Christ clearly stipulates fellowship and Christ-centered rationale for diversity, equity, and inclusion. If it is in the Word of God, and it is, this also validates evidence documented in Revelations 7.9, which contained a multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language. Biblical references provide and support a need to rethink traditional theology in African American churches. We look to Acts, Ephesians, and Revelation to gain clarification on how the Kingdom of God on earth must provide light to a dark and dying world. When a Church does not reflect Biblical New Testament Churches, we are not obeying God, that is a problem. When we exclude diversity, inclusiveness, and social justice in our training for pastors, leaders, and members, we fail as a New Testament Church. If we are not addressing social justice issues to help the marginalized in our community, we are

[36] Childs, Brevard S. "Interpreting the Bible amid cultural change." *Theology today* 54, no. 2 (1997): 200-211.

failing God, and that's a problem. Attending social justice issues will help to shape diversity and inclusion in African American churches. As the lead Pastor of Mount Sinai, and a community activist for the past 23 years, I am aware of community gentrification and a decline in attendance among young people in churches. Therefore, we must change how we think and what we do as a Church. As a result of prayer, church analysis, and speaking with leadership, we recognized we had to change, and we began a study on *"The Autopsy of The Deceased Church".* We had to look at all ministries and worship to make changes in our Church. We needed additional biblical and leadership training, partly due to the lack of inclusiveness, diversity, intersectionality, intergenerational, and we were not a multicultural Church. We were stagnating God's Kingdom, Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church, and the community in several ways. The Church did not allow female ministers and would not proactively confront LBGTQIA+ issues. We were not properly applying the Word of God to all of humanity by loving our neighbor. This was a leadership problem for which I take ownership. We discovered that the culture of the elite and lack of diversity does not work in God's church. In God's Churches, we still find elitist, classist, and marginalized people of all racial social, economic, educational, and gender backgrounds. If we do not change, we will hinder progress and growth in our communities. However, the power to overcome this is found in the Word of God.

f. The Power - The Theological and Biblical Context for Change

Rev. Dr. Susan K. Williams-Smith in her book, *"Rest for the Justice Seeking Soul,"*[37] provides 90 scriptural meditations beginning on page nine with Amos 5.6-9 with "The Quest to 'Hope' Somebody by seeking the Lord and live, …", and scripture, which is the Word of God

[37] Smith, Susan K. William, Rest for the Justice Seeking Soul, Whitaker, House, 1030 Hunt Valley Circle New Kensington, PA 15068, pg. 9

must provide hope to all of humanity and much more to the least, the lost and left out known as the marginalized. I remember very clearly Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Jr., would say often in his wit, "I want to hope somebody" which reminds me of the story of Rev. Dr. William Barber's Grandmamma who would say "We've got to *give hope to somebody."*[38] If the Black Church is to survive, it must seek the Lord at all costs because it must remember the purpose for its existence: to provide hope through salvation in Jesus Christ with justice for the least of these as the righteous arm of God to fight against Satan and his Demons (Matthew 25.40). Without a doubt, many theologians, pastors and denominations will wrestle with references in the Bible to the marginalized and the poor. That certainly is their preference, but there are Scriptures throughout the Bible that speak to justice, diversity, inclusiveness, age, sexual orientation and race.

Amongst the scriptures that illustrate justice are the following, (Psalm, 33.5, Psalm 82.3, Proverbs 21.3, Isaiah 1.17, Isaiah 30.18-10, Isaiah 61.8, Amos 5.24 and Micah 6.8) which emphasize the importance of justice and righteousness in the eyes of God and call us to act justly, defend the oppressed, and seek righteousness. Christians are directed to stand against injustice and love others with our words and actions. We will enjoy peace knowing that God prevails and abolishes evil. In this project, social justice is a relational term that means "to make right" as defined by World Vision as people living in the right relationship with God. The Bible defines social justice as a mandate of faith and a fundamental expression of Christian discipleship.

Obrey M.Hendricks Jr., states it well "This is a faith to which I am heir. It is faith that takes

[38] Ibid. pg. 9

seriously the ethical demands of the Gospel to love our neighbors as ourselves and to seek the salvation and well-being of the whole people."[39] (Luke 2.25). There are clear examples of social justice issues in the Word of God as in caring for the poor and afflicted, defending the weak in Psalm 82.3 is emphasized and navigating scripts that address oppression in Isaiah 1.17. New testament parallels are found in Matthews 25.35-36 - caring for the needy, James 1.27 - aiding the poor, and living in harmony - Romans 12.16 to identify. It is equally important that we understand the scriptures that cover the issues of Christian Education, age, and sexual orientation as it relates to this project. There are more than 100 Bible verses about Christian Education signifying its importance! Christian Education is notable in the Old and New Testaments. 2 Timothy 2.15, Ephesians 4.11-13, Colossians 1.28, Deuteronomy 6.6-7, Proverbs 22.6, Proverbs 9.9 that provide standards accompanied by specific areas for training the trainers. For our purposes in this project, it includes encouraging Seminaries, National Sunday School Boards, State Educational entities, and churches that are responsible for training congregations, educators, lay leaders, and pastors. Additional scriptures, including many others, that speak to the need for education are Proverbs 18.15, 2 Timothy 3.16-17, Proverbs 9.10, Jeremiah 29.11, Daniel 1.17, Romans 12.2, Ephesians 6.1-24, and Ecclesiastes 712 . Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen, former Professor at Edward Waters University, and current LISC Director, in 2014 focused our attention on his book "*A Charge to Keep" the Church Post-Civil Rights*, to warn us that Black Churches are struggling with his Millennial generations. He surveyed Black Church members in Jacksonville, Florida and discovered that, of the 27 percent surveyed, none had a church preference, and 84.1 percent attended a Black Church. The significance of this survey is to find

[39] Hendricks, Obrey M. Jr., Christians Against Christianity, Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, www.beacon.org, pg. xv

ways to elicit and develop spiritual views. More than twenty-seven percent of those surveyed strongly agreed that their spiritual view evolved in the Church, and 40 percent agreed that it evolved along with the Church.

The survey provides support and evidence that the evolution of spiritual views occurred because of the Church's vital connections to and understanding of its history, leadership, and spiritual dimensions. Dr. Cohen commented, on page 54, his view of the future of the Black Church, "the Black Church is poised to be a giant in the areas of social well-being."[40] However, leadership has to realize the greatest threat to reaching that plateau lies within its wall." His research further supports the need for the Black Church to rethink its traditional theology and become more diverse and inclusive within the walls of the Church. The social justice needs are not just speaking truth to power, it means becoming fully involved in the social requirements that change the narratives about feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the prisons, voting rights, and all human rights. Changing to pragmatic theology to embrace and promote diversity and inclusion does not occur overnight. However, this project, through research with diverse and inclusive team members, will address the responsibility of Churches to accomplish changes in practical theology in the Black Church. However, there will always be obstacles.

The obstacles that we will face are white and black noises of resistance, religious aspirations to maintain and sustain their current leadership roles in the Church, avoiding changes that might compromise their economic stability. This resistance to change is challenged in Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen's book "A Charge to Keep," in which he states the research reveals that "we must address the crisis for democracy that should be inclusive and diverse for all of humanity" (Cohen, page

[40] Cohen, PeDro Irvin., Dr, A Charge To Keep, The Changing Black Church Post-Civil Rights, Outskirtspress, Inc., Denver, Colorado

12). In a reflexive approach, we do not know what participants know or how they feel about being inclusive and diverse in Black churches. Most Black pastors in Jacksonville have some influence by White Baptist Seminaries and what Dr. Willie Francois characterizes as "White Noise" implying their training is sourced from Eurocentric theology. Many Black pastors have attended White, non-certified Bible Colleges and Seminaries. Their Biblical references are limited to KJV or the NKJV Bible, which do not advocate for the inclusion of females, gays, or other cultures in leadership positions in the church; they are undereducated unlearned theologians. This miss-education is not unique to Baptist Churches or many other Church denominations. Typically, white denominations attempt to address racially diverse and inclusive churches yet omit the social justice component. Considering this lack of training or interest, how can Black churches confront rapidly emerging cultural change in America without addressing social justice?

Our work must be intentional, and results driven as suggested in Dr. Eddie Glaude's book, *"Democracy in Black.."* He advocates, "Changing policies and addressing structural racism are the first steps toward undoing our racial habits." I agree with Dr. Glaude who suggested that we must bring our ideas about black folk out into the open, and we have to disrupt those accounts of black suffering that make us okay with the sad fact that some Americans – Black Americans — are more likely to languish in poverty. I am advocating we must also expose the realities that the Black church, through inaction, is harmful and impedes progress that moves the marginalized into the mainstream to access common services that have social justice applications. Dr. Glaude states further, "Blacks are more likely to attend bad schools; to not have work, lose their homes, go to prison, or to bury their children killed at the hands of police.

He advocates, “We must remove our mask to call attention to white advantage. That might help us to understand each other a bit better. It may bridge divides, disrupt assumptions that block empathy and get in the way of serious efforts to achieve in our country. As it stands, we don’t really talk frankly about race and too many people are too damn scared to say so.” I stand in total agreement with Dr. Glaude, thus, I advocate and stand firmly behind this thesis: it is, indeed, incumbent upon the Black Church to make adjustments in its policies and practices, to close the gaps between the Black Church and younger generations, and to this end be disruptive in the churches, and Christian Education boards. To navigate the current approach is without substance.

As a site team, we must not make "tacit assumptions." As the researcher, it is to recognize that the project thesis, as written in Tim Sensing's book, Qualitative Research, "the project thesis represents my (her) voice, interpretations, feelings, and emotions." As a result, as the Pastor, it is vital to acknowledge personal biases, self-interest, and emotions. However, the research must determine the outcome of this dissertation project to avoid contradictions as often and as much as possible. The thought process is that if we are obedient to the Word of God, we will be relieved of some of the pushback from individuals as well as denominations. The Word of God permeates the issue of diversity and inclusiveness.

Almighty God begins his redemptive plan of salvation with an end in mind. Through God's infinite wisdom, God established New Jerusalem during the creative formation of the cosmos.

In Acts 2, Luke revealed the coming of the Holy Spirit that birthed the New Testament Church on the Day of Pentecost, and God used the Holy Spirit to divide the tongues that looked like fire, and Luke described them as flames of fire. The Old Testament's fire indicated God's

presence as described in Exodus 3.2; 13.21; 19.18 Isa. 4.5; Ezekiel 1.4. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke different languages in purity and power, proclaiming the mighty works and presence of God. The word glossa, (plural) translated as languages, and various people understood the other languages in a new, more powerful way. It signified the new covenant age of Jesus' death until Jesus returned to earth again. In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul spoke, perhaps, about different types of gifts rather than different audiences. The elevation of the people and the Church acknowledges that there are many different languages in the world, which implies the existence of different people and different cultures. The setting in Jerusalem indicates they were not just Jewish pilgrims, they were residents. A closer look at Acts 10.45-46 reveals that those of Cornelius' house experience this phenomenon, and the disciples of John in Ephesus 19.6. Acts 2.14-5.42 witnesses in Jerusalem are clarified. However, the nations at Pentecost were Asia, Crete, Cyrene, Libya, Egypt, Judea, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Elam, Media, Parthia, Pontus, Cappadocia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, and this represents inclusiveness and diversity. Acts 2.19-21, Peter's quotation from Joel ended with the key verse (Joel 2.32), which assures that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord is saved. In Acts 2.17, the last days of the distant future were inaugurated at Pentecost (cf. 1 Cor. 10.11; 2 Tim. 3.1; Heb. 1.2; James 5.3; 2 Peter 3.3), indicating the continuation until Christ's return. Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh in the Bible is the Messianic age, which included (daughters) women in the upper room who participated in the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. God was inclusive!

g. The Local Exegesis of MSMBC’s Environment

We acknowledge it is time to rethink traditional theology as we develop pastors, church

leaders, and congregations in preparation to manage current and future changes and challenges. We must be aware that we need to anticipate beyond where we are today, thus we need to anticipate and build templates that hold us accountable for being prepared for the unknown. Therefore, churches must comprehend and implement the changes that are the biblical context of diversity and inclusiveness mandated by God and revealed in the New Testament churches as a biblical foundation for change. The African American churches need to observe the positive outcomes of churches that are already diverse and inclusive in their ministry or the negative impacts of those that have not. The churches need a workable practicum that any church can customize to fit its precise needs, which is part of this project. An analysis of the survey informs us that, when a church begins to embrace diversity, inclusiveness and standardizes social justice practices that promote youth and young adult's needs and concerns, they will come and will form relationships and alliances that will eventually enable seamless integration within our midst. By sharing current local, state, and national trends of Millennials, X, Y, and Z generations and using their media platforms to make reciprocal contacts using common technological tools (survey) to meet our needs, we hope to reinvigorate the Church's role in the community.

In Matthew 28.19, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the **S**on and of the Holy Spirit"*. Note, Jesus said *all* nations and did not spell out what made up the nations, just nations. In some cases, the leaders and church members are not aware that a lack of diversity and inclusion is a problem and does not reflect the true community we serve or the biblical mandate of the great commission. The message bible says, "go out and train everyone you meet far and near in this way of life, marking them

by baptism." Therefore, if one considers the Duval County school system, it is the reflection of everyone we meet in the city of Jacksonville.

Many Black Churches in America, because of their own polity, miss-information, and a lack of theological education, have failed to adequately address diversity, inclusiveness, age, race, sexual orientation, multiculturalism and social justice. If Black Churches and MSMBC desire to attract younger generations, social justice must be addressed and implemented. In the past, when education was offered, it was introduced with Eurocentric biases in the Southern States, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) trained Baptist and other denominations. The SBC provided an opportunity for the Black Church to learn theology, yet their training did not include diversity and inclusion in the biblical context that was clear nor exposed God's vision of inclusiveness that was designed at creation. "Since Washington Boyce led that church into the Southern Baptist Convention in 1951, the number of Black churches in the Convention has grown to approximately 4,000."[41] Additional SBC influence indicates "the impact of the Southern Baptist church planting movement in the Black community has accelerated the increase in predominantly African American churches. Since 1989, Southern Baptists intentionally have been starting churches in African American communities. These new churches are often singly aligned and tend to reflect a Southern Baptist programmatic approach."[42] I believe there is a need to redefine the way Black Churches do churches that align with the Mosaic God that is inclusive of all humanity. Even John F. Kennedy made a very important statement that is relevant to the Black Church. He stated, "Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."[43]

[41] https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/first-person-inclusiveness-in-the-sbc/
[42] Ibid
[43] https://www.rossross.com/blog/change-is-the-law-of-life-jfk#

The Black Churches in America are missing the future because many are still stuck in the past and some are stuck on Southern Baptist doctrine of mental slavery that diversity and inclusion are not Biblical as it relates to female pastors and, on Sunday morning when churches are segregated.

Sunday mornings are still segregated, and people of all races get up on "Sunday morning, get in their cars, head to church, and arrive just in time…and because we like predictability because change is painful and hard."[44] We are satisfied with church as usual. MSMBC was no exception, but in the New Revised Standard Version Bible used throughout this project states in Hebrew 13.8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." Jesus was inclusive of all humanity and revealed even at the well with the Samaritan Woman that she should avoid getting racial with him after she said that Jews did not have anything to do with Samaritans. Racism in America compounds the problems in the Black Churches. The Bible teaches us to respect our elders, the Black Church struggles with age. We are taught in the Bible that Jesus revealed the equality of male, female, Jew, Gentile, Free and Slave and we are all one in Christ, yet we struggle with gender equality and ethnicity in the Black Church.

The problem is further compounded because of the internal impact of the decline of the X, Y, and Z generations in the Black Church. "Millennials are leaving the Church at staggering rates, and nearly a third of the Millennial generation has already identified themselves as being religiously unaffiliated. They are leaving for reasons such as, they feel the Church is too hypocritical, judgmental, inauthentic, exclusive, or political."[45] "In terms of identity, Generation Z is the least religious generation yet. More than one-third (34 percent) of Generation Z are religiously unaffiliated, a significantly larger proportion than among millennials (29 percent)

[44] Church Lynn, Jack., Clear Vision, Weslyn Publishing House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46250, pg. 35
[45] https://www.americansurveycenter.org/research/generation-z-future-of-faith/

and Generation X (25 percent). Fewer than one in five (18 percent) baby boomers and only 9 percent of the silent generation are religiously unaffiliated."[46]

This requires a rethinking of what the Black Churches preach, teach, and a need for a new curriculum approach to attract the younger generations. The various Christian Education curriculum writings by the UMI and National Baptist Sunday School Boards to meet the ever-changing cultures of the 21st century lack an inclusive context. There is a need to understand the global generations of Gen X, Y and Zer's and a need to address social justice, however we must assure the curriculum is comprehensive. *The ABC of XYZ: Understanding the global generations by M. Mcrindle and E. Wolfinger* is a great resource for curriculum development. In the Bible, depending upon the translation and interpretation of the New Revised Standard Bible, social justice in numerous verses must always be considered as a reliable source of scholarly accuracy. This part of the purpose of this project is to attract, teach, sustain and develop youth and young adults in faith and social justice.

Some specific verses in the New Revised Standard Bible that address social justice in the Old and New Testament are Psalm 82.3, which states," Give justice to the weak and orphan," which explains the right of the lowly and destitute. In Isaiah 1.17, "Learn to do good, seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." Luke 11.42, "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and the rue and herbs of all kinds, and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. Exodus 23.1, "You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness."

[46] Ibid

Ecclesiastes 5.8, “If you see in a province the oppression of the poor and the violation of justice and rights, do not be amazed at the matter; for the high official is watched by a higher, and there are much higher ones over them.” Jeremiah 5.28, “They have grown fat and sleek. They know no limits in deeds of wickedness; they do not judge with justice the cause of the orphan to prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy.” Amos 5.24, “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” It is not enough to just read, teach and preach about justice, we must implement and integrate it into the culture of the church. MSMBC of Jacksonville was no exception and the local problems economically, educationally, environmentally, and politically caused millennials, and Gen X, Y, and Z to evaluate and critique MSMBC and other local Black churches. Younger generations are aware of the suppression in society and very aware in Jacksonville, Florida. An additional purpose of this project is to address intersectionality of problems in Jacksonville, the Black Churches, MSMBC and Generations X, Y and Z.

1.) The Interconnection Problems of Jacksonville’s and God’s Words

What does interconnection mean as it relates to God in my local context and exegesis? As the butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazon, it first had to come out of the cocoon after a radical transformation. Our community is still in a transformative state of being harried. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 a complex treatise of how I characterize the American of African descent communities, females, LBGTQIA+ in Jacksonville and even globally. Theologically it reveals how we are all comprehensively challenged, but not crushed, perplexed and in despair, (which wrestle with Paul's writing) persecuted, but not abandoned; (this provides another wrestle with the text), as people feel abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed), 2 Corinthians 4.8-9 may

provide hope for those who feel victimized by oppression, suppression, and systemic racism. However, the people in Jacksonville's local exegesis are harried politically, economically, socially, educationally, and judicially by both white privilege and black "want to be, "privilege that is perpetuated by social class and an unwavering desire for status. Dr. Umer J. explains it this way, "In 2016, Blacks spent two billion on Air Jordan tennis shoes, and bought two times more Mercedes Benz than whites to surround themselves with symbols when a community that thrives is based upon having a bank, schools, supermarkets, and hospitals.

All of humanity has a right to live and thrive in a state of health, wealth, and spiritual existence. When one's health is poor, and financial status is well below the poverty level, spiritual well-being wrestles with hope while having a proclivity for a better existence in society.

This matters because the absence of self-sufficiency, self-respect, and self-efficacy, may lead to suicide, health disparities, premature infants and/or a higher infant mortality rate, extreme poverty, increased substance abuse, domestic violence, and higher crime. The voices of the younger generations and, in our churches, make the noise about "Black lives," and declare that Black Lives Matter because they are tired of police profiling, law enforcement abuses and murder. They are keenly aware that the Black Churches have been mostly non-responsive. These concerns open a canvas of their contributions to the state of the Americans of African descent, it masks their needs, struggles and purpose as humans. In Jacksonville, a classic example in our local exegesis is referenced in Helen Keller's efforts to achieve social change when she spoke to John D. Rockefeller, founder of the Standard Oil Company that controlled 90% of the oil wealth in the world. Keller asked Rockefeller to discontinue his practice of

oppressing the poor, stating, "Mr. Rockefeller is the monster of capitalism, the very man (Rockefeller) who gave out charity was responsible for the state and federal authorities killing dozens of women, children and men because they demanded their rights as human beings." We have Rockefeller types in Jacksonville. One such person is John Peyton, petroleum company owner and former Mayor, and his father, Herb Peyton, amassed $1.44 billion in sales in 2008. He and the Bush family of Texas were friends. During his tenure as Mayor, more "Blacks were killed by law enforcement. In that same timeframe, he presided over the construction of an oversized $300+court facility wherein an inequitable number of contracts were awarded to Black Contractors. This facility has become an expansive place where people of color are herded through to provide free and oppressed labor to the prison industrial complexes in the State of Florida. Here in the state of Florida, from 1983 to 2015, VERA statistics published a 275% increase in incarcerated persons, and a 733% increase of women prisoners. Today, there are no air-conditioners in these prisons, and living conditions are deplorable. Former Mayor Peyton awarded 1 million books to kids with accompanying funds that were earmarked to establish preventive and intervention programs; he did not address the underlying issues of poverty, economic disparities, or the lack of equity in business contracts for Black contractors. These situations contribute to the prison industrial complex system. Like Rockefeller, he donated to charity, yet, also like Rockefeller, he did not follow advice to bestow funds to programs and initiatives that would have created sustainable improvements in the community: the eradication of gangs, domestic violence, infrastructure in the "Black" community, and jobs. Peyton's attitude was not unlike Rockefeller's, whom I challenged at every opportunity to understand the applications for Matthew 25 wherein Jesus asked a very important question,

"when I was hungry did you feed me?" When the people of Jacksonville were hungry, did John Peyton feed them as Christ did? Feeding is more than food in this context. I believe that people need better job opportunities, adequate pay, better health care, education, economic, and judicial equity. These are the gifts that deliver them from the ills they experience and make them self-sufficient. Instead, Peyton continued the same old policies of disparities? The one social issue that has compounded the strife, poverty, and crime in Jacksonville is economic disparity that yields impoverished neighborhoods. Jacksonville's citizens were crying in the wilderness of despair and the churches were quiet while the X, Y, and Z generations expressed their discontent. If Black Churches wish to include these generations, they must join the fight for social justice. A more in-depth examination of Jacksonville's economic priorities is important.

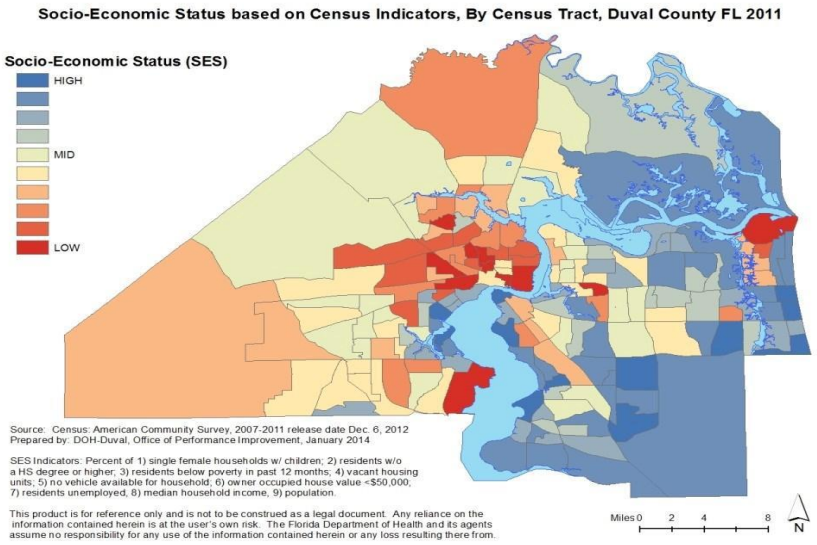
Economics is the driving force in the American capitalistic society, and Jacksonville is no exception. Economic and health disparities exist in Jacksonville, Florida. Jacksonville's political structure is a fully consolidated city-county government that failed to address economic and health Disparities. In 2013, the 2010 Census Bureau estimated that more than "870,000 people resided in the 774-square-mile city." Jacksonville is very different demographically from most of Florida's larger cities in that it has a relatively low Hispanic population, but the city is 33% African American, the highest proportionate African American populous in the State of Florida. The African American community is disproportionately affected by poverty and inequalities, See Figure 2. "DOH Duval has examined Socioeconomic Status (SES) by Census Tract (CT) using a social index (Census indicators) that includes: 1) % single female household w/ children, 2) % residents w/o a HS degree or higher, 3) % residents below poverty in past 12 months, 4) % vacant housing units, 5) % of households with no vehicle available, 6) % owner-

occupied houses valued <$50,000, 7) % residents unemployed, and 8) the median household income. The zone (as a statistical measure) is taken for each CT and averaged to create a continuous variable of SES." The Black Churches saw this, but the people lived it and the younger generations rejected its characterization as fair.

2.) Impact of Health Disparities and Needed Response

Once again, Black Churches must exploit every opportunity to inform our congregations about issues of life, and health disparity; this awareness is critical to the survival of everyone. To revisit a question posed earlier in this paper we asked, "how are the children?" If children are not healthy, the family is most likely not healthy. To this point, Jesus offered several important comparisons in Matthew 25 in the judgment of nations. "I was sick, and you took care of me." From a social justice, moral and ethical perspective, this statement must be articulated persistently before the government, health agencies and churches as a mandate for change. The chart that follows illustrates the disparities.

FIGURE 2 HEALTH DISPARITIES FROM PUBLIC RECORDS


Socio-Economic Status based on Census Indicators, By Census Tract, Duval County FL 2011
Socio-Economic Status (SES)
HIGH
MID
LOW
Source: Census: American Community Survey, 2007-2011 release date Dec. 6, 2012
Prepared by: DOH-Duval, Office of Performance Improvement, January 2014
SES Indicators: Percent of 1) single female households w/ children; 2) residents w/o a HS degree or higher; 3) residents below poverty in past 12 months; 4) vacant housing units; 5) no vehicle available for household; 6) owner occupied house value <$50,000; 7) residents unemployed, 8) median household income, 9) population.
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The red areas depict neighborhoods that are low-income and thus present social and environmental disadvantages to the residents. Considering poverty status alone, Duval County CTs range from 1.5% of residents living in poverty up to 55.5% in the highest poverty neighborhoods. Inequities in economic status often follow inequities in health, which reflect the situation in Duval County. The research captured above was prepared by Katryne Lukens Bull, Coordinator, Public Health Statistics, Assessment and Research, Florida Department of Health Duval, for Jacksonville Community Wealth Building Roundtable, March 27-28, 2014.

Unfortunately, this situation has not changed much in the eight years since it was shared. It is therefore imperative that Black Churches step-up to collaborate with younger generations and establish relationships of trust, and partner with them to re-engineer traditional theology so that it becomes relevant and empowering. Contemporary theology is exemplified in God's prayer in 3 John 1.2 as a commendation to Gaius hospitality, "Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul" (NSRV). The reference to 'all' in this verse means inclusive of everything, whole, as indicated in the Greek (pas) the whole, entire, and therefore cannot exclude wealth (economics), not in the concept of prosperity gospel. However, in Jacksonville the poverty or the misalignment and marginalization of all ages, races and sexual orientation needs to change.

To further share this economic disparity which ties into Jacksonville's care of infants' health, one must commit to being a moral leader and public advocate and must use empirical data to validate arguments. See Figure 3 below. The study shares that, although efforts to attack health disparities and inequities were initiated more than a decade ago, they still persist in the County,

exacerbated by current economic trends, thereby building layers of cumulative disadvantages in access and opportunity. For example, the public transportation system is limited; inadequate secondary school funding and recent reductions in funding for postsecondary education and training appear to result in increased health problems correlating with geographic areas where environmental, economic, and social inequities occur. These statistics must be used in our Christian education program to highlight evidence of the violations of God's commandments and to aid the advancement of diversity, inclusiveness, intercultural, and social justice work as a part of the ministries of the church often referred to as a Healthcare Ministry. It must be more than a Nurses guild, rather, it must include building a team and cadres of church members who develop and participate in programs intended to maintain good health. Every ministry must commit to contribute to servant leadership and service to others as provided in the scriptures of God. We can begin with Mathews 25, "Judgement of the nations", and Matthew 20, "Labors in the Vineyard" which instructs us that there are expectations to work in ministry, not just be one.

Life expectancy from birth is a summary measure of mortality that is used to measure inequities. Public records, and research from Duval County Health Department, Jacksonville, Florida instruct us, "Life is calculated by predicting the risk of dying at each age based on the actual number of corresponding deaths that occurred by age. This additional disclosure reported in Katryne Lukens Bull's study, in laypeople's terms, reveals that economic disparities contribute to the health disparities, and they are killing the babies of Americans of African descent. She explains further in the study that Life expectancy is closely correlated to wealth/poverty and education. Overall, education is a strong predictor of life expectancy. The more educated the population of an area, the fewer deaths predicted for each age group, yielding

a longer life expectancy." The report is summarized below:

Between Health Zones:

- HZ1 has 4-9 years shorter life expectancy than all other HZs. (Center of NW Quadrant)
- HZ 2, 3, and 6 have the longest life expectancies overall.

By & Between Races:

- Blacks have the same life expectancy across all HZs except HZ1.
- Whites have the longest life expectancy in HZ3 and HZ6.
- Whites have a ***shorter*** life expectancy in HZ5 than Blacks.
- Blacks have a ***shorter*** life expectancy in HZ3 than Whites. County, State, and Nation
- Duval County has a shorter life expectancy than Florida, by an average of 2.6 years, and the U.S. by 1.5 years.
- Blacks in Duval County have the same life expectancy as Blacks in the U.S.
- Whites, males, and females in Duval County have a slightly lower life expectancy than those in the U.S.

The study informs, also, that Life Expectancy is improving in Duval County. Infants born in Duval County in 2010 can expect to live 2.3 years longer than those born in 2000, but improvements are not seen across the spectrum. See Infant Life Expectancy Figure three below which provides information for understanding the magnitude and consequences of the problems.

Map 5

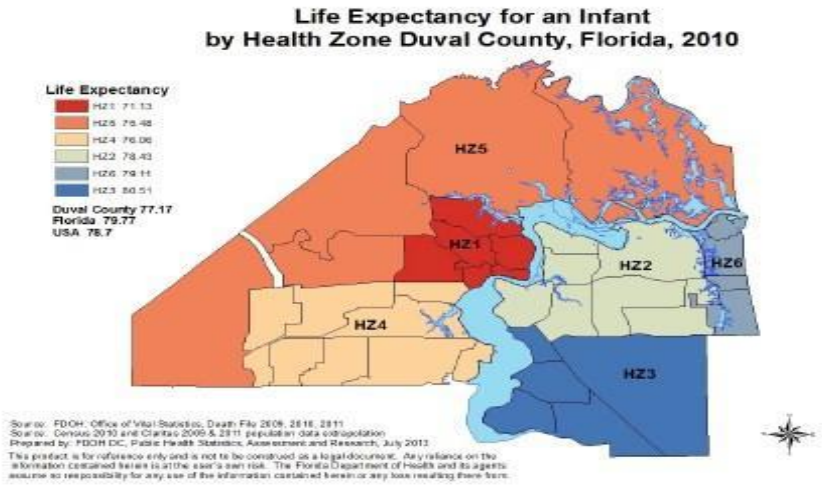

FIGURE THREE – LIFEEXPECTANCY OF INFANT HEALTH

Once again, I reiterate that we have a billionaire giving charity, in addition, a former owner of the Jacksonville Jaguars Football team giving charity, and the current owner of the Jaguars giving charity, and politicians running for office on empty promises wrapped up in "White Noise" (Dr. Willie Francois). We live in a community that is worth more than a trillion dollars valued in shipping ports, beaches, tourists, Jacksonville Transportation Authority, Jacksonville Airport Authority, Jacksonville Port Authority, and yet, the Northwest Quadrant income gap metaphorically is not just wide but getting wider like the rest of America and the global world. The American Compass study in 2019 reveals through the "US Gini coefficient that inequality is at its highest point in 75 years, the wealth gap."[47] The highest poverty neighborhood living in poverty in Jacksonville is 55%.[48] This represents an additional need for the Americans of African descent churches to speak with prophetic voices and use multicultural and multiethnic intergenerational efforts to seek social justice for humanity. Why?

The historical context provided above relates to the intentional and purposeful laws enacted before and after Consolidation of the Jacksonville Government, and blatant systemic racism perpetuated by the law enforcement Sheriff Office, Former Mayor Hans Tanzler, and other government officials as written in the Gainesville Sun Newspaper by Amy Reinink, and Sun Staff writer May 12, 2018. "In 1967, when the consolidation vote passed 55,000 to 30,000, Jacksonville was a 37-square-mile city with a population of about 150,000. Its schools were unaccredited, air and water pollution were rampant, and several of its elected officials had been

[47] https://americancompass.org/economic-inequality-guide/?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIl4aJ9P-c-gIVaRbUAR3uSAg9EAAYBCAAEgJMHvD_BwE

[48] Bull, Lukens Katrine, Coordinator, Public Health Statistics, Assessment Research Florida Dept of Health Duval

indicted on charges of bribery and larceny.", said James Rinaman Jr., an attorney who helped spearhead the plan in the 1960s. Imagine, in addition to these conditions, allowing developers to build in the urban and suburban areas of 870 square miles without regulations that have plagued the city with excessive leaking septic tanks into the river, toxic waste in parks, schools on toxic waste sites, and tributaries contaminated with toxins that have likely killed thousands. Historically, the very high lung cancer rate and other infectious diseases, such as asthma, diagnosed in the Black community are linked to toxins detected in homes, water streams, water wells, parks, and air pollution. I uncovered these problems in 2009, and they continue to exist in 2023. See Figure 4 below to gain a better view of the problems that Millennials, X, Y, and Z generations witness and live with as citizens of Jacksonville. To add to these maladies, it is well documented that children and families have been impacted by the Brownfield sites in the city. The illustration below of the toxic sign in Lonnie Miller Park that shows Black children were allowed to play even though it was clearly toxic is tragic. Pastor Gundy, during an interview with a reporter, provided a different perspective.

FIGURE 4 - LONNIE MILLER CONTAMINATED PARK

"Pastor R. L. Gundy of MSMBC said the toxic ash from the city-operated incinerators penetrated the neighborhoods from 5th and Cleveland Street where he grew up. "You could see the smoke and smell the stench of the toxic waste, but you did not know what it was or that it was killing you." Kimberly Morrison, a Staff writer, wrote on June 1, 2009. Updated May 28, 2009, 10:57 am EDT JACKSONVILLE — "There are just a few small green plots of ground encased by concrete curb around St. Stephens African Methodist Church, but what soggy soil exists is about to be dug up… (This was the church I was raised in as a child until I was 18 years of age). This property and an additional 1,100 acres were contaminated by three city-run municipal incinerators that operated until the 1960s. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency documents confirm that they burned trash into ash that left arsenic, lead, and other metals in the soil combined with additional septic sludge and other toxic wastes. Many members had cancer." The reporter went on to say, "The city last year dubbed the area and its $94 million cleanup Project New Ground.

However, the contamination sites included in the project were long known by the names the EPA gave them — Jacksonville Ash and Brown's Dump — when they were deemed among the most hazardous wastelands entered the federal Superfund program a decade earlier." How is this related to rethinking traditional theology of Christian education?

Information like this is not readily noticed by or available to the Black congregations although they might have lived in the areas, or in many cases were affected by these toxic sites. The Black Church can include this type of information in the educational forum of Christian education *"love your neighbor"* suggested in Matthew 25.

Further in the interview, she quoted, "The Jacksonville Ash Site encompasses three former

incinerator sites — McCoy's Creek Boulevard and Margaret Street; Fifth and Cleveland streets; and Moncrief Road and Soutel Drive. Moreover, Brown's Dump includes the former Mary McLeod Bethune Elementary School. R.L. Gundy, 55, is at Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church and grew up just a few blocks from one of the incinerators. He remembers playing in it. Pastor Gundy stated, "You could smell it, you could see it, but you did not know what it was,' said Gundy, who has been diagnosed with prostate cancer. He talks about how many neighbors and friends have developed cancer and other diseases, not knowing for sure if the earth below was the cause."[49] As Pastor of MSMBC, I quickly discovered that activism in Jacksonville is critical. Considering all the issues posed, this demonstration project is asking several research questions to generation X, Y, Z, several pastors of leading Black churches, and conducting a survey of the MSMBC church congregation to determine if rethinking the traditional theology of Christian Education in the Black church is viable. Thus, four guiding questions for this project are presented. Below RTTCE means: Rethinking the traditional theology of Christian education.

Some of their answers are similar and some provide additional insight into the curriculum that is revealed in Rethinking Traditional Practical Theology of Christian Education (RTPTCE-2). All the concerns and issues explained above have caused the community to become intoxicated with despair, in the midst of the misdeeds, abuses, and neglect by a consolidated government of promises made, but promises not fulfilled, the younger generations have observed and experienced a quiet clergy in Jacksonville. These are amongst the reasons younger generations have fallen away. They see no hope through religion and no hope being provided

[49] Morrison, Kimberly The Jacksonville Business Journal, Staff Writer June 1, 2009, https://www.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/stories/2009/06/01/story1.html

through the churches. The Black Churches in Jacksonville were quiet on the issues of infant mortality, police brutality, lack of economic opportunity, environmental racism, and diversity and inclusion. The younger generations exited Jacksonville churches in large numbers leading up to and after the Covid Pandemic. MSMBC is not excluded from the exodus of these targeted generations. Because of the perceptions of the younger generations, whether real or imagined, they characterize churches as being judgmental, and not connected to the community. These generations did not acknowledge the relevance of the churches as they struggled with the issues of Black Lives Matter, and true social justice that was diverse, inclusive, and multicultural. Subsequently, research questions were developed to help determine how the various generations would return to the Black Church. Why are social justice issues important to diversity and inclusiveness in Black churches in the twenty-first century? Our answers are found in God's Words in the Bible. y.

h. Brief Overview of Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. Chapters two through six are summarized below.

Chapter 2 introduces and provides insight to the character and actions of the very successful Activist and Leader of Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Senior Pastor and Activist Dr. Alyn Waller. Because of his outstanding accomplishments, we decided to benchmark his organization to determine how we could model his successes at Enon. In this section, we will disclose lessons learned from his leadership and his church ministries and determine what our takeaways can be used as input to our design for building and implementing best practices. Rev. Dr. Waller joined me to observe this project from a perspective around

diversity, inclusion and its applications for the Black Church. The chapter opens with an introduction that chronicles Enon's history and a transcript of conversations and insights extracted from these talks with Dr. Waller. The purpose of the chapter and the interview is for me to learn and grow, honor Dr. Waller's legacy, benchmark his practices, model his ministry and provide a brief overview of MSMBC as the project site.

In Chapter 3, we describe the purpose, methodology, and strategies we will employ in our research about the value and urgency of this project. Practicum One is described in detail together with a description of MSMBC's history and current operations. Here we also introduce the interview participants.

Findings sourced from the interviews, as well as specific generational concerns and recommendations that include the respondents' demographics are delineated in Chapter 4. Analysis of the inputs generated a cohesive document of outputs and actions that suggest tools and training, design and development of processes and procedures that MSMBC must operationalize to address the targeted groups that will revolutionize its current environment. We will also show how these actions and recommendations changed the content and direction of our initial curriculum practice.

In Chapter five emphasis is directed to ministerial skills and competency including strengths and weaknesses and suggests an approach that will be used to mitigate or eliminate weaknesses to enable seamless implementation of our solutions. Finally, in Chapter six, we will summarize lessons learned from which we will generate and adopt best practices.

Chapter 2 The Pastor/Activist/Mentor- Lessons Learned from Dr. Alyn E. Waller

Chapter 2 focuses on interviews with Dr. Allyn Waller, Pastor, Enon Tabernacle Baptist

Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Over the course of six months, he and I had three rather lengthy conversations, and, in August 2023, I visited his church in Philadelphia PA. At the beginning of our conversation, he described the structure of his church**.** Then, we ex**p**ounded upon its history. Finally, the third part lays out our dialog, The interview with Dr. Waller, although brief, was compelling, inspiring, and stimulating.

My Interview with Dr. Alyn Waller

Question #1: Dr. Waller, in view of the gentrification that is taking place in our communities, how important it is to become more multicultural. He replied that he and his church, Enon, face this same issue in Germantown and that confronting it is critical to keeping the church viable and relevant.

Question #2: Dr. Waller how the Black Church can become multicultural. or should it? Dr. Waller replied the church is already multi-cultural, because it is composed of people from various backgrounds and geographical locations. Our dialogue changed when I stated that, while probably true in Philadelphia, it is not consistent with the black churches of Jacksonville.

Question #3: How can we become more diverse and inclusive in the Black Church?

As an activist, Dr. Waller led the way after testing positive for COVID 19 by offering, "I believe that it's probably God's assignment that I am here at this moment to encourage people to know that we are going to be alright." (Philadelphia WPIV ABC Channel 6) He had recently collaborated with the Black Doctors COVID-19 Consortium to perform testing in the Church parking lot. Record numbers showed up on May 24, 2020, after Pastor Waller said President Donald Trump's call for Houses of Worship to Reopen is "Political Pandering". He said, "the truth of the matter is that science still suggests that it is not safe to gather in large crowds, of

course the Church is essential for more than Sunday morning. What the President just did was political pandering to the right, extreme right wing, to make a point for their votes."

Reverend Dr. Alyn E. Waller is the Senior Pastor of the Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. A highly sought-after revivalist, vocalist, and lecturer, Dr. Waller is a true visionary of the Church and the community who serves humanity far beyond the constraints of traditionalism. His partner in marriage, and ministry, is Dr. Ellyn Jo Waller, the leader of Enon's Women's Ministry and a devoted mother to their two daughters, Elynn Morgan and Eryka Lynn. Since 1994, God's anointing on Dr. Waller's pastorate at Enon has been evidenced with unprecedented spiritual and congregational growth. Dr. Waller draws on his love for people to shape God's vision for Enon, *"A Place Where People Encounter God,"* through the servicing of more than 75 innovative ministries. Enon regularly hosts various community awareness events and health and wellness initiatives that offer AIDS testing and other critical health screenings.

Dr. Waller's outreach extends far beyond the walls of Enon through local community activism and radio, television, and social media commentary. Internationally, he serves as the President of the Lott Carey Global Christian Missional Community and, through Enon, he has established church locations throughout South Africa. Furthermore, Dr. Waller has preached in South Korea to crowds that exceed 100,000 and has presented at an Oxford University roundtable on religious theory. The heart of Dr. Waller's ministry can be experienced through his musical gifts. In 2004, Dr. Waller released a CD, "With His Permission". He has supported various Enon CD music projects. In 2015, Enon and Pastor Waller founded the Enon Music Group record label and released, "Dr. Alyn E. Waller Presents Enon Tabernacle the

Experience." Additionally, Dr. Waller has opened musical events headlined by musical groups including Mary-Mary, the Clark Sisters, and Fred Hammond, and has headlined his own "Celebration of Gospel" at the Mann Music Center in Philadelphia.

A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Dr. Waller's educational achievements include a B.S. degree in Music Business, Ohio University, an M.Div. - Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; a D. Min. in Ministry to Marriage and Family - Palmer Theological Seminary. In addition, he was awarded an honorary doctorate from Lincoln University. Prior to his tenure at Enon, Dr. Waller served as Minister of Music at Canaan Missionary Baptist Church (Louisville, KY) and Senior Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Donora (PA). He is the author of "Enjoy Your Journey: Our Quest for a Deeper Relationship with Christ" (2006) and "Hope for the Journey: Believing God is Enough When the Road Gets Rough" (2011).

The Church – Enon Tabernacle Church Described

In July 1994, the Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church called Dr. Waller to lead them as Senior Pastor. God's anointing on Dr. Waller's pastorate has been evidenced with unprecedented spiritual and congregational growth. As a result, in July 2006, Enon became "one church in two locations." Enon purchased 34 acres that is now the site of a new church edifice, which includes a 5000-seat sanctuary, chapel, computer lab, bookstore, dozens of classrooms and offices, and a Family Life Center where banquets, athletics and ministry events are hosted.

Today, Enon hosts three weekend worship services, one of which provides live-streaming to serve a congregation of over 15,000 members. Dr. Waller leads two weekly Bible studies at the church and the "Hour of Power" lunchtime Bible study in Center City Philadelphia. Prayer opportunities are offered twice daily at all of the church locations. Rounding off these

commitments, Dr. Waller and the Prayer Ministry team lead a daily, early morning prayer-line. .

Dr. Waller draws on his love for people to shape God's vision for Enon: "A Place Where People Encounter God." With more than 75 ministries that focus on discipleship, fellowship, missions and camp, evangelism, and worship, Dr. Waller's arms stretch wide to touch the needs of people who come to church as well as those who do not. Dr. Waller has developed innovative and effective ministries at Enon that include Sexual Abuse Survivors, Domestic Abuse Survivors, and Cancer Survivors. It is not uncommon that Enon hosts various health and wellness events that include AIDS testing and other critical health screenings.

Dr. Waller has a passion for developing youth. To this end, Enon utilizes most of its land that surrounds the church as a "big backyard" for its youth ministry. There they participate in various competitive teams, such as cheerleading, football, basketball, baseball, track, and scholarship Ministry. It is of note that the scholarship ministry provides annual merit awards and stipends to dozens of students. Finally, it cannot be overstated that its mission to support Bible-based ministry that is educational, evangelical (discipleship), inspirational, and averse to negative and demonic forces in their community are relevant. His words inspired me when he said, "don't change the message, change the delivery." This caused me to rethink my transformative message of salvation, through ministry, proposed to relieve people of their suffering. I thought about how Dr. Waller influences the political system in his city. Mayors do not become Mayors in Philadelphia without having a conversation with Dr. Waller. The Pastor/Activist made it very clear that when President Trump spoke of opening the churches during the pandemic he was not speaking to his Church in Philadelphia, he was posturing to the Southern Bible Belt and to the political Right in Pennsylvania. "You can't declare me open

when you did not declare me close." Christians don't limit their support to Christians, we support everyone. Enon's history is equally impressive, *Looking back over our 136 years…*

Enon's Historical Context - Ministry with the New Millennium 1994 - Present

This is taken directly from the Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church website. Enon is a faith community of over 15,000 members committed to using their collective resources to strengthen families and communities. The first African American Baptist church in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, Enon's impact is felt beyond the walls of its physical structures, spilling into the local community, throughout the city of Philadelphia and reaching across the globe to Africa.

Under the leadership of its current Senior Pastor, Reverend Dr. Alyn E. Waller, Enon is proud to have contributed over $1 million to organizations, including the UNCF, which are meeting critical needs. In Dr. Waller's words, "Enon is unapologetically youth oriented." So, elementary school students in Germantown seldom need to worry about being ready to start the school year because the church provides every student in need with a backpack full of school supplies annually. Once Enon's students are ready to pursue a postsecondary education, they have the opportunity to earn college scholarships, including a number of full four-year scholarships. Enon's commitment does not stop with the provision of financial resources. The church's members serve others by participating in 98 ministries. For example, the church's competitive athletics program provides a haven for roughly 600 young people. More than 100 volunteer coaches, mentors, and chaperones help the children develop life skills and provide activities designed to insulate them from the negative influences that plague urban youth. Notably, several of Enon's football teams and Enon's cheerleading squad earned the

opportunity to participate in the Disney Pop Warner 2012 National Championships in Orlando, Florida. When a local high school's library was in such disrepair that it could no longer serve students, Dr. Waller spearheaded a campaign to refurbish the library using the human capital of the church's membership. Countless Enon members provide the community with a wide range of other free services, including tutoring, food and clothes distribution, counseling, and transportation. The church's legal ministry hosts free legal clinics, its medical professionals sponsor health fairs, its financial ministry helps the community get their business affairs in order, and members enrich the lives of the elderly, the infirm, and the incarcerated by regularly visiting and encouraging those in nursing homes, hospitals, and prisons.

The church is also committed to the global community and has supplied clean water to communities in Kenya, provided food for children orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Uganda, and supported programs to combat drugs, gangs, and human trafficking in Cape Town, South Africa. Each year, hundreds of Enon members self-fund missions' trips to sites in the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa.

The members of Enon generously support Dr. Waller's work as an evangelist and artist, as well as the First Lady's advocacy for victims of human trafficking. They demonstrated wonderfully how God's love can greatly impact a community as one body in Christ with a collective effort in ministry.

Progressive Ministry in Changing Times 1950-1974

On Easter Sunday in April 1950, Reverend William B. Toland preached his first sermon as Pastor of Enon. Under his spiritual guidance and dynamic leadership, the church was able to grow and improve in several significant areas: increased membership, organized several

ministries, purchased and installed a Moeller organ, acquired central air conditioning for the main sanctuary, and a 20-room wing and a new kitchen were added. In 1950, Reverend Rena Thompson became the first female preacher and was installed as associate pastor at Enon. In 1952, Reverend Toland established the Negro Achievement Program to celebrate African Americans' contributions to American society and to inspire African American adult and youth achievement. In the words of Reverend Toland, his goal was that "each Negro in true painstaking steps walking in his own field keeps ever plodding until he arrives to a place of distinction and glorifies his God who made him, his nation that sustains him and his race of which he is a part." In response to the turbulent conditions in the mid-1960s, Reverend Toland, in 1966, changed the focus of the Negro Achievement Program from one of achievement to one of unity of all Americans. The program sponsored art exhibits, music, talent programs, and multicultural guests and speakers. After the death of Reverend Toland on April 4, 1974, the Church continued to prosper under the leadership of Reverend Noah Carter who served as Interim Pastor.

The Beginning of a Rich Legacy 1876-1912

In 1875, Reverend J.D. Brooks presided over a Sunday School class in a frame building that was then known as 5 West Coulter Street. In August of 1875, the small group of Christians convened a council of representatives from area churches to explore the feasibility of organizing a Baptist church at the site. After prayerful consideration, on August 26, 1876, the council recommended that the group move forward with their plan to become an organized church. On September 21, 1876, the council, at a public service, acknowledged Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church by and, with seven members, became the first African American Baptist Church in the

Germantown section of Philadelphia and the 55th African American church in Philadelphia. Named for the place where people came to be baptized by John the Baptist, Enon, for more than a century, has been guided by its foundational mission of reaching people for the cause of Christ. On November 15, 1876, Enon's founder, Reverend James D. Brooks was called as the Church's first Pastor. The cornerstone for Enon's current West location, 230 West Coulter Street, was laid in May 1879, and its debt on the adjacent Missionary Building was paid in 1889. Reverend Brooks served as Pastor of Enon from 1876 until 1905; he was succeeded by Reverend D'Augustine Reid who served from 1905 until 1911, during which time the Church received its charter.

Continuing A Strong Tradition 1975-1994

In July 1975, Reverend Gordon S. Houston, Sr. accepted the call to serve as Enon's Pastor. Under his leadership, the missionary offering was changed to the consecration offering and the Helping Hand auxiliary was formed. Reverend Houston served until July 1978, after which Reverend Cornelius Parker served well as Interim Pastor until 1979. In 1979, Reverend Willard M. Lamb accepted the call to the pastorate and established a Monday evening Bible study, the Saturday Institute of Instruction, and Unity Day (combined Men's and Women's Day). Reverend Lamb retired on December 31, 1989. Reverend Vernel McDonald served, with exemplary leadership, as Interim Pastor until the Reverend Robert F. Mennefee was called in February 1991.

Under Reverend Mennefee's pastorate, many changes were observed at Enon. Rooms were repainted, the Pastor's Study renovated, the lower Church refurbished and air-conditioned, and new groups, such as The Drama Guild, formed. Reverend Mennefee resigned on December 15,

1991, whereupon Reverend Charles E. West succeeded him and served well, and with great leadership, as Pulpit Supplier until March 1993. The Pulpit Committee, while it continued its search, appointed Reverend Joseph Williams to be Interim Pastor. He officiated from April 1993 until June 1994.

Building a Solid Foundation 1912-1949

Reverend J.C. Brown succeeded Reverend Jemison and served as Pastor of Enon from 1912 through 1917. During Reverend Jemison's administration, the old Church was demolished, and a new edifice was built. Reverend Frank B. Mitchell, Sr. was called to serve as Enon's fifth pastor on October 17, 1917, and served until his passing on January 19, 1932. During his pastorate, the balcony was built, and a pipe organ was installed.

Reverend Clarence C. Lockett ably supplied the pulpit after the passing of Reverend Mitchell until 1933, when Reverend Adolphus Hobbs was installed as Pastor. Under Reverend Hobbs' leadership, membership increased rapidly, and the Church was enlarged and remodeled. After the death of Reverend Hobbs in 1948, Reverend D. Wills served as Supply Pastor until Reverend William B. Toland accepted the call in October 1949.

Enon Tabernacle Baptist Now

Enon Tabernacle Baptist, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania continues to be a thriving church with thriving ministries. Enon describes itself as a community that serves in ministry through their communities. Their communities are commission, elevation, exaltation, organization participation, preservation and sanctification. Their website at https://enontab.org describes each of their working communities. I invite you to explore their ministry opportunities as models of growth and development in your ministries. You may not be able to duplicate all of their

ministries, but you may be able to emulate them conceptually in your designs. Enon believes that God's people grow deeper through Illumination (discipleship), warmer through Preservation (Fellowship), broader/larger in Commission (Missions and Evangelism), and stronger through Exaltation (Worship). I agree, and likewise, MSMBC has acquired a profound appreciation of or the concepts of commission that we now refer to as nations. Social justice must be articulated in our churches and communities as nations that are developing, growing and striving to fulfill a noteworthy purpose.

Enon and MSMBC have enjoyed a rich history. It is very satisfying to witness the similarities and differences. Enon is unapologetically committed to youth. Emulating their model for youth ministry will revolutionize MSMBC and Black Churches who are willing to rethink their traditional theology practices. Rethinking requires re-focusing as one body in Christ and the fulfillment of God's Commission in Matthew 28. As an Activist Pastor at MSMBC, moral leader and public advocate for change, I will commit to the same model. Delaying our pre-pandemic 5-year plan had significant social, economic, environmental, and mental health implications at our church and in our community. In the meantime, benchmarking offered significant awareness of their connection with youth, young adults and other groups through which MSMBC can model to bring about the changes it desires for the target community. This work has led to the design of a curriculum that MSMBC and other Black Churches can use to effect positive change.

The History of Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church -MSMBC

MSMBC is one-hundred sixteen years old this year. The current membership of 362 active members ranges in age from newborn to 94. The demographics in 2023 are: 50% - 70; 30%

over 35; 10% fall into the 18 to 25-year-old bracket and the remaining 10% are under 17. These statistics imply that MSMBC's survival goals must include architecting and sustaining an agenda that includes worshiping and *serving* its internal and external community. This must include exploiting Christian and experiential education and skill building to execute programs, policies and practices that satisfy the collective needs of its constituencies. MSMBC has always embraced a culture that is synonymous with the Black Church. The Church's tradition has been conservative theologically, moderate in support of social justice issues and progressive educationally. For example, we operated a kindergarten in the 1950's. During its long history, the seven pastors did not deviate from its cultural norms and conventional practices of Christian education as documented in its historical files. It is noted that the church was designated as a Historical Landmark. Its successes, notwithstanding, MSMBC acknowledges its obligation to grow spiritually, congregationally and financially. We must evaluate how we manage and conduct church applications, discipleship, fellowship, and other spiritual aspects of worship and ministry. We must use the results of these evaluations to make improvements throughout our ministries as well as our policies and processes.

From 1908 to 2000, the Church, like most, if not all Black churches, was dominated by males programmatically and administratively. Located at the corner of Six and Lee Street in the Durkeville/Mount Hermon Area, the Church was a dominant, conservative, middle-class family congregation that enjoyed success in many areas. Its members were active in local associations and participated in State and National Conventions. The construction of Interstate 95, which sliced through the middle of the community, caused confusion about how to plan travel routes from the community to the church that was literally across the street. As a result, numbers

declined because members were unwilling to navigate a different route around the expressway. Other reasons, unrelated to the expressway, impacted their decision to withdraw; among them were inadequate parking space, deteriorating structure and inadequate or nonexistent accommodations for the disabled. Ultimately, the building was demolished. Upon examination of the congregation's demographics, historical records, and pictures, augmented with information from Deacon Joe Bailey, who is currently 93 years old, “things started changing after the expressway and we had postal workers, business owners, teachers, nurses, and some service industry workers who felt they needed to find a new location." The church members began to move to the suburbs, and some willing to drive more than10 miles; this practice continues to this day. Others were unwilling to travel long distances, and, because the church did not attract new members, declined and ultimately split. Deacon Bailey confirmed that the Church was a conservative Baptist Church; he characterized its membership as "elitist." Throughout Mount Sinai's history, the Church divided several times until 1998. R. L. Gundy became its Pastor in 1999.

In 1999, MSNBC was a member of the oldest Baptist associations in the State of Florida, East Florida, and Bethany Baptist Association, each having strong leadership.
However, the association, though successful in many areas, was conservative, not diverse, inclusive, but did not address social justice issues, a problem. The Church was also a member of the Florida Progressive Missionary and Educational State Convention and the National Baptist Convention of America, and neither of these organizations was diverse or inclusive, a problem. Rev. James Davis, together with a few prospective members, started Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church in 1908. For 92 of its 115 years and seven pastors, the Church ignored diversity,

inclusiveness, sexism and racism as viable issues that it needed to address. It was not until the arrival of Pastor R. L. Gundy, in 1999, stated that females were allowed to sit in the pulpit, correcting past failures to recognize gender inclusiveness. Unfortunately, even Pastor Gundy's dark side of leadership, inherited from improper theological training, did not broaden the concept of inclusiveness to support sexual orientation. Conservative black *and* white evangelical Southern Baptist and uncertified Black Seminaries fundamentally defined biblical training for many churches, including Mount Sinai, while influencing ministers. As Pastor of MSMBC, I was not excluded. Southern Baptist Convention schools also shaped the doctrines that other pastors in Jacksonville adopted and articulated. The Jacksonville Seminary, Florida Progressive Seminary, not reflective of its name, and Luther Rice Seminary designed and delivered its Biblical training based on a biased cultural context. As I reflect on my participation, I am reminded of great advice in the statement that says, "when you know better, you should do better." Latta R. Thomas, in his book, Biblical Faith and Black Americans adds clarity to this statement as he admonishes, "God speaks for himself, biblical scholars have their workable jargon or special terminology. They have a term associated with proper procedures for rightly interpreting the Bible through proper exegesis."

Improper exegesis is, and always has been an unsettling aspect of leadership that reduced and undermined the marginalized in African American Churches and communities; it delivered biased or simply inaccurate contextual or just incorrect evaluations. Available Christian education was typically delivered in BTU and Sunday School classes. We can now say, without fear of retribution or censorship, that the alleged words of truth were clouded with misinformation, miseducation, and misinterpretation of exegetical principles rather than

exegesis principles. These deficiencies precipitated missed opportunities to incorporate diversity, inclusiveness, intercultural acceptance in our curriculum, delays in or a failure to support social justice incidents in real time. As we move into the 21st Century, Black Churches have not yet found a voice to acknowledge, own, and programmatically prioritize these situations, thus, it continues to lag as it struggles to find solutions.

It is of note that dissension in the Church led to a significant mass exodus, and exposed the *dark side* of Church polity, leaving its members, both individually and collectively, spiritually and financially drained. Is it possible that appropriate extended theological and Christian Education training paired with Sunday School books and BTU would have yielded a different outcome. I believe it might have proper orthodoxy and application of dogma that is biblically based. This dark side of leadership not only existed in MSMBC, but it is also a microcosm of the dark side of leadership that exists across America.

Another dark side of leadership in MSMBC's history occurred when a very qualified preacher and capable theologian was called to replace Rev. Benjamin Jefferson Lane after his death. The pastor brought unresolved personal issues. Prior to his death, Pastor Benjamin J. Lane, although he mentioned it in a pedestrian manner, did not incorporate relevant applications of ministry - age, sexual orientation and racial issues - into the fabric of the church. Pastor Lane was a product of his time; his leadership positioned him to be a highly respected role model for other pastors.

Following Pastor Lane's tenure, the church called a new Pastor to replace Pastor Lane. Like Pastor Lane, his successor was very conservative; they gave no consideration to female leadership in the church except ministries that were typically assigned to females- music,

ushers, or deacons' positions that did not require hard leadership, accountability or decision-making skills or overindulgent interactions with male counterparts. However, the Pastor that followed Pastor Lane completed his ministerial studies at a conservative seminary yet he was unable to internalize the training nor use the accompanying tools that might have assisted him with overcoming his struggle with a long-term substance use disorder, a problem that devastated his life and subsequently led to his incarceration. Why is this information emphasized in this setting? He took actions that caused monumental financial losses and a significant decline in membership.

The financial crisis occurred because of lack of oversight, a deficiency in the leadership of a disparate population, and the absence of inclusiveness and a lack of awareness of the importance of intersectionality. By 1999, MSMBC's membership had dwindled to 125 members. Fortunately, church leaders in the persons of Deacons Joe Bailey, Chairman, Leonard Wilcox, Dewitt Cooper, Randall Malpress, and Trustees Jessie Wilcox, Willie Sanders, George Smith, George Owens, Sis Rachael Donald, and Deaconess McClain-Burroughs, Earlene Malpress, and Johnnie Mae Demery banded together to preserve the Church. Ironically, in a crisis, the leaders formed a diverse team, yet were blinded by the obvious absence of diversity and inclusiveness in its formal mission.

The church leadership pulled together as a diverse group in a crisis demonstrating that when true intersectionality occurs, diverse groups can achieve positive outcomes. The leaders and members realized that they needed reciprocal support if they were going to survive as a church. This historical backdrop sets the premise for the context of this research project. In 1987, in an effort to remove the hurdles of being landlocked, and the difficulties of maintaining a failing

building, MSMBC moved to Historic Springfield where it had purchased a Seventh Day Adventist Church edifice. This move was proposed to stimulate membership growth, to continue community service activities, and to engage in selected civil rights issues. However, a prevailing conservative culture and elite status of classism precluded our participation, a problem. In April 1999 I arrived at MSMBC, sent by God and appointed Pastor.

During the Lord's business meeting I articulated the need to decide if we would remain in the same Springfield Location or search for a new church home. I stated, further, that if the decision was to stay, it would be under the following conditions: we must remodel the building and purchase additional land. Surprisingly, as the discussion progressed, and gained momentum the desire to serve emerged. A soft, yet powerful voice materialized, and his provocative comments are recorded in the historical records of Mount Sinai. It was Deacon Joe Bailey who stated, "if we leave this community, who will serve the people and address their needs?" The Springfield and Jacksonville community was riddled with AIDS, drugs, crime, racism, sickness and numerous other social ills. After this first meeting the Church leaders and members voted to stay in Springfield by majority, but not affirmative vote - some members elected to leave.

Deacon Bailey's question energized our spiritual thoughts about servant leadership, the civil rights movement, gentrification, and the recollection that MSMBC was originally only one block from the central hub of the civil rights movement at St. Stephens African Methodist Episcopal Church located on 5th and Davis Streets. MSMBC is a life member of the NAACP and was active in the civil rights movement in the 1960s. These two Churches provided a platform for the eventual emergence and development of R. L. Gundy as Pastor and Community

Activist. When God sent him, and MSMBC accepted him as their Pastor, he had attended St. Stephens A.M.E Church until he was 18 years old. There he learned about Civil Rights but attended Mount Sinai's kindergarten for his educational foundation. Call it a coincidence, or fate, I see it as a divine calling from God. Additionally, the first location of MSMBC was 1551 W. Lee Street; Pastor Gundy's address as a young child was 1551 W. 6th Street, call it a coincidence or fate. Pastor Benjamin J. Lane died on March 16th and my birth date (Pastor Gundy) is March 16, coincidence or fate? Pastor Gundy's mother was buried in Restlawn Cemetery in 1988 right next to burial plots owned by MSMBC, call it coincidence or fate? MSMBC moved from 1551 Lee Street to the corner of Six and Lee Street and this is the background of the local exegesis for this proposed project. There is much more to share!

MSMBC and educational institutions in the 50's and St. Stephens was a civil rights hub. The decline in programs and services has given rise to a need to revamp traditional theology. These historical facts are etched in historical documents and reveal a period of non-inclusiveness, male dominance, anti-diversity, and a lack of understanding the application of age, sexual orientation and race that round out the social justice issues that penetrate the heart of grace filled with the love of Christ. To break the traditions that preclude their spiritual edification and membership erosion, the Black Church of the 21st century is compelled to take advantage of, not lightly or superficially, transformational Christian educational training delivered by skilled theologians. Only then will it be able to achieve a solution through the application of a holistic approach and strategic vision. Only then will it be able to discontinue the double standard that has plagued their ability to transform themselves and their community for far too long. Pastors and churches of the 21st century must collectively recognize,

acknowledge the new Jim Crow, reconstruction, Woke, Black Lives Matter Movement, intersectionality and other compelling struggles. Black churches must then bring the fight back in-house and must plan new strategies that deal with discriminatory judgments that are plummeting down from the Supreme and State courts. Black Churches must adopt a policy of inclusion and relationship with people of all colors and cultures and, along the way, we must not ignore the issues of immigration in America. Why? As you eventually read the curriculums, you will find that Generations X, Y and Z are concerned about truth and justice. Our humanity is being compromised by partial laws of voter suppression, unequal rights, abortion, white nationalism, racism, and sexism. When the Black Churches rethink traditional theology, they must include transformative agents for God and combat these sinful flaws of unrighteousness together as one body in Christ. One body in Christ looks like what we hear young activists stand up and shout, this is what democracy looks like. The images we see in the streets of Jacksonville are people of all ages, sexual orientation and race. Why is it that the church of the 21st century does not look like a community? Are we beyond the racial gridlock? Are we a culture of many colors? Do we have the strength to love our neighbors? Are we beyond being color blind? How can “Black " practical theology through Christian Education address age, sexual orientation, and race. How do we address healthcare, capital punishment, poverty, globalism, education, intergenerational relations, capital punishment, immigration, or mass incarceration?

This dissertation is proposed to address three problems through Christian education initially; the long-term goal is to continue to pursue issues that challenge traditional theology in Christian Education to replace it with training in transformational change where needed. There is still

much to be discussed about a plethora of issues that are channeled through traditional theology in every church in America and particularly the Black Churches. Why? Because of how we evolved and emerged as the "Black Church" and developed Black theology, we can preserve that which is not obsolete and integrate it with the existing relevant portions. Former theologians, who wrote specifically to the Black Churches, learned something, whether good or bad; whether accepted or rejected. The praxis of Christian education requires definition, theory, critical reflections and actions, and practical applications in the Black Churches to seek justice for all. The book "Black Practical Theology states it well, "Firstly, we take "praxis" to denote a kind of reflexive ecology encompassing religions, practices and theology that is informed by theory and guided by values and ultimate purpose(s)."[50] Christian education provides a purpose and orthopraxy ecclesiastically beyond the traditions to achieve a meaningful outcome for humanity through God's word. We're not meeting the needs of generations X, Y and Z at MSMBC so our next question must be, where are the children? How will the Black Church address the absentee children in the pews?

WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

The question, where are the children must be included in this project because we are discussing and researching how to attract generations X, Y and Zer's, but also other generations, including, in some instances, their children, or their contemporaries who, like themselves, are living in community chaos - child abuse, foster care, gun violence, human trafficking, and poverty. A chief goal of the Civil Rights Movement was to end poverty, children were victims of as well as participants in the struggle to end this atrocious condition.

[50] Andrews, Dale P., Smith Jr., Robert London, Black Practical Theology, Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas 76798, pg. 4

Black Churches must ask the question, as we have at Mount Sinai, where are the children in the 21st century? This question motivated me to give more attention to Mount Sinai, when I toured Harlem, New York during my second year of work in this project. There, during a discussion, one of my professors asked the question: where are the children? It was a question I will never forget; I added, how are the children? I know that if the children are not well the community is not well. So, I have set a compelling goal at MSMBC to "target" children and youth, along with the X, Y, and Z generations to meet their 21st Century needs. I give credit to and emulate Rev. Dr. Allyn Waller's approach to working with youth in the Church he pastors. It is in the same manner that MSMBC is proactively including youth in worship service, has crafted and organized new athletic programs, events, and planned activities for youth. We are available and willing to open dialogues with youth to learn, understand, grow, implement, and partner to enable an inclusive spirit and to create an environment that supports their needs. We, in Jacksonville, Florida, are plagued with the same violence, drugs, and serious mental health issues that have infiltrated and caused great harm to this maligned and marginalized community. This situation is not unique to Jacksonville; it is not the only "Black" community built around incinerator sites where schools and communities were situated near toxic waste sites known as *Superfund* sites. Even MaliVai Washington (a famous Black American tennis professional) tennis facility sits 'prominently' on a toxic burn site at 6th and Grothe Street. We were made aware of these facts during the discovery phase of a lawsuit against the City of Jacksonville charging systemic political and social racism. Attorney Cindy Laqadarius, who was on the General Council for Duval County, verified this information.

The children were reared in "containment areas" that were enclosed behind prison-like

fences, constructed and marketed under the guise of new community development. The communities within those fences were surrounded by and contaminated with extreme, orchestrated poverty. At the same time, fifty years ago, the Hip Hop generation emerged, introducing violent games labeled as technological advancement that continue to have a major impact. Today's parents and grandparents, who are younger, or who remain engaged in social activities longer, rather than parenting, are found partying together in the clubs. So, where are our children? Are they maneuvering through combat zones called neighborhoods? Some are in prisons having been tried as adults and are being used as cheap labor 'affectionately' touted as social reform. Where are the children? In Jacksonville, Florida they are attending 60-year-old schools infested with rats, roaches, broken air conditioners and heating units and entrenched in languishing poverty that robs them of basic nutritional food.

It is imperative that the Black Church rethink its collective traditional theology and become, not just more diverse and inclusive culturally. If it hopes to survive, it must open and expand its narratives to include the economic, educational, judicial, political, social and spiritual needs of the children. If they are hungry, and they are, feed them. If they need clothes, and they do, clothe them. Moreover, both parents and their children must be trained in basic life skills. The Bible speaks to us about children in Ephesians 6.4, "And Fathers, do not provoke our children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." If there is no father, the church must fill the gap as intercessors in prayer and time. Our children are in the streets, hanging out on the corners --lookouts at the young ages of 7, drug dealers at 10, and gang bangers at the age of 13 because we have failed to position and move with them in the right direction, as shared in Proverbs 22.6. Again, where are the children at Mount Sinai?

Some became affected and live with HIV AIDS, some have been killed by street violence; some are struggling as they identify openly as LBGTQIA+; some are struggling in schools; some are in the church. We must see them, we must join them in their walk, now more than ever if we want to be useful and relevant in their life. The children's eyes, minds and hearts are focused on technology, yet they are missing God's nutritional food. Unfortunately, we do not have access to all, so we save who we can as often as we can. We advocate education, but we must also be available as mentors and tutors and trainers. We must listen actively, pray continuously, and form genuine, meaningful relationships. Our children are among us, begging, sometimes silently, and often lacking the use of conventional language, for our attention and for unambiguous support of their plight. So, it is not sufficient to simply ask, *where are the children?* Black Churches must position the question as the "Masai " would ask, how are the children?

This question is often associated with the people of East Africa and is frequently used by Rev. Dr. Wilson Goode of Philadelphia in the Leadership Foundation Amachi program. This greeting of the Masai reflects their strong sense of community and concern for the well-being of children. We can supplement our learning by observing Enon's approach to athletics as one of the tools for reaching and teaching children about life and God. To ask *how* the children are is to essentially inquire about their welfare to assess the future of the community. This data will the insight into the local exegesis of Jacksonville, Florida and supports the MSMBC's goal to interrupt and refocus its traditional theology that targets the needs of children.

The question, where are the children and how are the children amplify concerns for children's current and future condition, however they are handled in ways that align with

their cultural context. On the one hand, the question might be a straightforward inquiry about a child's specific location. In other contexts, it can be a more symbolic or metaphorical question, asking about the state or condition in a broader sense, particularly in relation to their safety, well-being, or future prospects. MSMBC needs to open discussions around the latter question, and to incorporate it in its revised training in Christian Education proposed for African-American churches. We will design and deliver training imported from a curriculum that is faith-based. We are willing to partner with other Black Churches, urban or rural, that may wish to customize their programs to fit their environment. MSMBC will need to build its training around the demographics of the population it serves currently or has a vision to serve.

Attempting to put new wine in old wine skin has been costly for MSMBC. We have spent more than one million dollars on building infrastructure upgrades, expansions, purchases of property and a building for a business incubator, mentoring, youth programs, boy and girl scouts. In addition, we upgraded sound systems, video equipment, installed wi-fi, monitors throughout the church and enlarged our music ministry. However, it has been our goal, since 2000, to direct our greatest energies to serving the community. We realized that our success in this area necessitates a different approach. As mentioned throughout this paper, and in keeping with our goals and objectives, we must change the way we operate within the church and how we advertise who we are to the community. And, how we look and interact with the community must reflect these changes. As the saying goes, we cannot keep doing the same things and expect different results. We must overhaul our mission, vision and guiding principles, steeped in true and unbiased Christian education, delivered by the guidance and messaging of the gospel to our own community and to a global network of diverse individuals and cultures. We must not

only become moral agents of redemption, but we must also create an environment where all people not only feel included, but they also feel accepted, valued, and useful. Thus, our focus must not be limited to the demographics, it must necessarily be linked to one's actualization of self in God's church.

This requires a refocused Christian Education program, and a consistent application of our policies that speaks to all levels of teaching and training. Within our geographical area of five miles in all directions, we witness extreme poverty, while downtown, approximately 2 miles of real estate is overflowing with development, including a proposed new Jaguar Football team stadium, and river front development. We face these challenges that bring to bear Dr. Alyn E. Waller's words, "Gundy you keep the message, but change the delivery." In the same context, when Dr. Waller was asked about growth, he stated, "one of my methods to help our church grow was sports programs." It was natural for him as a person that was an athlete who loved sports. This initiative is one that MSMBC supports and will implement. And, because of the influx of people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds, genders, sexual orientation, and others, into this growing community, we must learn how to serve and share the gospel. Moreover, we must learn how to become a New Testament church. Our guiding principles must be sourced from God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. To accomplish this, MSMBC must be intentional about how it revises its Christian education curriculum such that it is visionary and comprehensive and thereby fulfills the needs of its current and future constituents. This is our plan; it is our mandate from God to make disciples, not new members, disciples for Christ. The Bible clarifies and validates our mission, as we see it when Jesus thanks the Father in Matthew 11.28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I

will give you rest. We began this new journey by changing our vision statement to "A local Church with a Global view." We decided several years ago, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, that we needed to "re-engineer" our church to bring it into the 21st century, but we did not know how. So, after much discussion and consideration, we began to recruit youth, young adults and younger families while millennials and other younger generations were leaving. What was our approach to accomplishing our goals?

While we have placed substantial emphasis on diversity, equity and inclusion, we have not abandoned our concerns around other forms of injustice. We will borrow from our experience with this dissertation, our project approaches that led to its development and implementation of methodologies that will enable us to move forward and take on existing and new initiatives in our own church. We will not limit our scope to MSMBC, we will share our successes with other Black Churches in our community and, ultimately, globally. Why?

Our church has struggled with our Black Church orthodoxy, orthopraxy and orthopathy as related to our target groups. We must use Christian education to define these three theological terms that have become a paradox to churches, not as defined as much as applied. As the rapper Kool Moe Dee said in his lyrics, "Life or death with my breath, my voice is a cure." Our collective voices, beyond the vernacular, in our churches and ministries must become a major contributor to the cure for injustice in the community and in the world, we live in. What we say in our churches must be more than argot, it must be genuine because we are dealing with matters of life and death.

Our orthodoxy must always swing on the hinges of authentic belief that emanates from the Word of God. Christian education augments our beliefs. When we study God's words in the

Holy Writ about the New Testament church, we do not find segregation, systemic racism as practiced by evangelical nationalist or others in America. In our orthopraxy of correct conduct that is both ethical and liturgical, all churches must show up and promote to the world the right doctrine, true love, and be the moral agent for faith and justice for all. MSMBC had to reevaluate itself by refocusing our faith through the love of Christ and to express that love, unconditionally, towards all humanity. Our orthopraxy must be beyond our faith; it must be an extension of grace through Christ. Black Churches must enforce the appropriate practices of beliefs, traditions, family, culture, and discontinue the strict adherences to its conventional lay practices of doing church as usual.

To achieve these goals, MSMBC is indeed rethinking its traditional theology as we grow spiritually in Christ. We measure our success one day, or one person at a time. For example, one of our most conservative Deacons at "The Mount-MSMBC is Deacon Randall Malpress. During a discussion at his home, during Communion he stated, "Pastor your preaching and teaching changed my liking about judging people, I have learned to accept and love people for who they are." Preaching and teaching diversity, inclusiveness and social justice works, but change does not happen overnight.

I am hopeful that, by the time you read this dissertation, learn from the practicum and allow change to occur, someone you know or, perhaps a perfect stranger, will bring you to a moment in your spiritual life and fill you up with gratitude from God as I was in that moment with Deacon Malpress. As I walked out of his home, I noticed a sticker on the window of his truck that read, "tolerance, love and justice is important." That statement confirmed his beliefs for me. This spiritual awakening occurred because of our Christian education initiatives at MSMBC

and its growth must be ethically, financially, morally, numerically, socially, and spiritually grounded and aligned with the true New Testament church found in the Books of Acts, Ephesians and Revelations. If human beings don't change and if the Black Churches do not change their delivery, we will witness even greater declines in our relationships with our target groups.

Let me borrow from the hip-hop band "The Roots," "One love, one game, one desire. One flame, one bonfire, let it burn higher. I never show signs of fatigue or become tired. Cause I'm the definition of tragedy turned triumph." The Black Church must internalize the messages and the symbolism in lyrics - we must turn our tragedies of failing to change into triumph. We must commit to teaching truth to power and to the younger generations and, thus, mobilize for change. Christian education is an option and resource to tackle these issues, yet using this option is not an exhaustive solution. For this reason, I utilized information from my discussions with Dr. Alyn Waller, the Senior Pastor of Enoch Tabernacle Baptist Church, and other activists, to avail myself of their experiences and skills to assist me in sorting out my concerns around navigating the data to assist me with developing solutions through ministry. I will define these issues and address the problems associated with them such that the Black Church comprehends the problems, implications and the reasons our findings reveal a critical need for change.

What are the components, issues and implications for DEI, and the underlying or associated problems of age, sexual orientation and race in the Black Church that are merely microcosms of the larger society. To assist the Black Churches to address these concerns I developed a Christian Education Curriculum accompanied by a tool kit.

Rethinking the Traditional Theology of Christian Education Curriculum/Tool Kit

The methodology to change traditional theology through leadership training, small group instructions, intersectionality realities, cross-cultural training, and ethnography is essential to extracting the expected outcomes of this project. These project outcomes will heighten awareness of the importance of solving the fundamental problems within our scope and the magnitude of the consequences it bestows in our community. This effort will require a thorough mixed research study method, and the development of a practicum with accompanying worksheets and a study guide.

This awareness and study will help to usher in an impetus for churches, communities, and leaders to learn to become more diverse and inclusive through multicultural and social justice principles of liberation. The theological premise of liberation is not limited to just hearing the word of God, it lines up with promoting its application as essential to success. In his book, Liberation Theology, Cambridge, wrote, "historical antecedents to liberation theology that liberationist perspectives have a long pedigree in Christian theology." Liberation is part of the foundation of this project, advocating for diversity and inclusion as a liberating force within the Black churches is part of the church's liberation and social justice history. It will have a profound long-term effect on American society that may not be immediate yet must begin.

Soong-Chan Rah, in her book, Many Colors, wrote, "The call to build a biblical community of faith that encompasses the diversity of races, nationalities, cultures, and ethnicities that will be seen as an important part of the church's responsibility" (Rah page 11). The widespread social and ecclesial segregation is not new. It is not about the divide between white and black in Christianity; we must always consider Asians, Native Americans, browns, and

multiracial complexities in our society. So how do we minister to all from a theological platform? The churches need a workable practicum that any church can customize to meet their local Church needs. This precept is incorporated in this project. It is our goal, thus, to promote youth and young adult needs and concerns of all races and ethnicities. On this journey, we must always be mindful of the importance of addressing social justice in its entirety. We incorporate Lee Ann Bell's definition in her book co-edited with Maurianne Adams that defines social justice as "both a goal and a process". The goal of social justice is full and equitable participation of people from all social identity groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. The *process* for attaining the goal of social justice should also be democratic and participatory, respectful of human diversity and group differences, and inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacity for working collaboratively with others to create change." By sharing current local, state, and national trends of Millennials, X Y, and Z generations and using their media platforms to reach out to them with a survey to meet our needs, we hope to reinvigorate the Church's role in the community. Sharing youth media platforms will inform and assist our ability to set goals for this dissertation designed to build a culturally diverse and inclusive environment of worshipers trained in social justice issues. We will use this as a platform for more involvement in social justice advocacy from a multicultural perspective and engage younger generations through intergenerational approaches in the local Church and community through ministry.

Engaging youth and young adults can be accomplished by reframing "the How's and Whys" of leadership as written by Craig L. Pearce and Jay A. Conger Shared Leadership," who stated, "Diversity may be complex…it could increase conflict." However, "not all research finds

negative diversity effects" (pages 62-63). Reading the book on shared leadership helps answer the questions about being diverse without conflict. The answer is that "decision making techniques could be used to address initial difficulties to reach a consensus." However, "in time, racially diverse homogeneous teams tended to disappear over time as diverse teams gained experience working together." Yes, there will be some difficulties, but even Jesus' disciples had difficulties with Mary Magdalene and others; however, they resolved their differences through their faith in Christ. In understanding these simple principles, concerns, and the biblical context, what methods will we consider helping Black Churches rethink their traditional theology.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

In Chapter 3 we will introduce a curriculum concept for rethinking traditional theology for Christian education. In this segment, describe the history and current state of MSMBC and why this project is important for this local exegesis. This educational program is intended for use at MSMBC but may be used as presented or customized for other churches as a tool for spiritual growth, church development and to promote and support equal justice for all humanity. (See Appendix A - Proposed Curriculum Modules and Objectives)

At MSMBC, we needed to take a deep dive into the protocols that we follow, and to analyze and assess the situations that trigger the following questions.

1. Why did MSMBC decide to rethink traditional Theology of Christian Education?
2. What are the underlying conditions that sourced the reasons that MSNBC chose to undertake this project? How did we get here?

We recognized the necessity to extend our hand to the generations we have lost and to encourage them to return to the church. We had finalized the ‘Autopsy’ of a deceased church

and realized that we needed to launch it into the 21st century and fashion it to undergo change. The COVID-19 pandemic changed how the world operates, how we interact with businesses, family, friends, educational systems; the church is no exception. We learned how to worship and teach our congregations remotely. Gens X, Y, and Z reminded us that the church must be available to love everyone, thus, this curriculum insight is a recommended approach to this end.

The idea to Rethink Traditional Education must be explained in the context of how it is crafted to interest the target group. Otherwise, there are too many variables to consider - the age of the congregation, church polity, culture, neighborhood demographics, and perceptions of leadership. We must therefore establish a clear vision, mission, goals, objectives and guiding principles for the Black Church. It requires conducting one-on-one and group interviews, surveys, and important inputs from the youth and younger generations. It requires a sincere examination of oneself as a pastor, as church leaders, and as a congregation. One must then evaluate deficiencies and successes to determine and prioritize the next steps. We must also manage the challenges. As pastor, the utmost hurdle is patience. In this regard, the pastor may view needs that are in direct contrast with the congregation's goals. This being said, building a consensus with at least an 80% level of agreement is essential because congregations may feel intimidated by this magnitude of change. This is not abnormal; it is to be expected. Some may view change as a Cassius Clay (Mohammad Ali) and Sonny Liston moment, "I shook up the world." To make or suggest a change to a Black Church whose history and foundation has evolved from and been plagued with system racism would be shocking for some. So, the best approach must be Biblically based and developed into a clearly defined curriculum, that speaks to the unique needs of the church.

To create the curriculum, we must address the following topics and approaches: An introduction to non-traditional practical theology, Christin education and diversity, and practical ministry.

a. Introduction to Non-traditional Practical Theology**:** In the introduction, the student will learn the meaning of traditional and its significance for Christian education. The concepts of diversity and inclusion, as sanctioned by the church, are included.

1.) Social Justice and the Bible: This lesson will explore the biblical basis and implications for social justice. It will also examine how the church can be a change agent while promoting social justice.

2.) Pastoral Care and Counseling: The focus in this segment is to provide care and support to individuals and communities that have experienced discrimination. In addition, it will explore how to create safe physical and psychological spaces for people who wish to share their experiences and feelings.

b. Christian Education and Diversity**:** This course will Provide instructions for designing and building a diverse and inclusive Christian education program. It will share teaching methods and strategies that address issues of age, sexual orientation, and race. Preaching and Worship: Lessons will describe the context of preaching and the content of worship practices that are inclusive and address social justice issues. Various preaching styles, including content and delivery will be emphasized. We will integrate social justice themes and content into worship services.

In this lesson we will break down the component topics into heuristic lessons crafted to

topics into heuristic lessons crafted to deliver training that illustrate how to acknowledge diversity and inclusiveness. Including these topics in the curriculum arms our target groups with a deeper knowledge and appreciation for our church's mission, structure and operations. This knowledge, combined with the skills they will acquire will embolden and empower them to partner with us to create open spaces in our church and in our hearts to accommodate and embrace *all* the people we are called to serve "The Gospel of Mark begins his account of the life of Christ by showing that Jesus was entirely unconventional in the way he communicated himself."[51] To challenge Christian Education in the Black Church is unconventional, it is out of the box thinking. However, God was a Mosaic Global God that is culturally diverse.

It is important to remember that we must not ignore the changes in demographics nationally and, increasingly, in Jacksonville, Florida. Multiculturalism must be addressed; we are obligated to acquire an ethnographic understanding of cultural differences and similarities. How would you address cultural competence and humility? Cultural sensitivity, awareness, age and generational diversity, differences and similarities are important to building intergenerational relationships.

Therefore, ageism, stereotypes, discrimination, cultural biases, language interpretation differences, gender identification, cultural terminology are all components of this track. Biblical perspectives and interpretations based upon cultural differences are also important areas that we must explore. Additionally, intentional strategies that promote diversity and inclusion in the Black Church are essential to eliminating homophobia, sexism, prejudices and internal racism. This is why it is important to begin within one's own purview, starting with the leader himself,

[51] Chandler, Paul-Gordon, God's Global Mosaic, What We Can Learn from Christian Around the World, IVP Books P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426, pg. 89.

pastor and the leadership team to establish an open and sustainable environment that welcomes everyone that enters its doors to participate in these efforts. Together we will learn and build the Biblical and social strategies into our newly designed curriculum. Rethinking Traditional Theology aims to perform a thorough examination of the issues in our focus and come to a complete understanding of the implications for our church. Furthermore, the final design subscribes to the creation of a safe and inclusive environment for all individuals and fosters a sense of belonging and respect. Along the way, the products of our rethinking will compel us to unlearn and relearn the behaviors, language and relationships we have developed about people who are perceived as different from us. How did we get to this point, why do we suggest these changes to Christian Education? What were the problems?

c. Rethinking Traditional Theology of Christian Education - "Transformative Christian Education"

Embracing Diversity and Justice to offer and implement changes that will interest Generations X, Y and Z enough to facilitate their return to the Black Church. The Black Church has always had some form of liberation attached to its existence and within its walls. The erm liberation theology accepted by some and rejected by others is transformational, it is diverse, it is inclusive, it is multicultural beyond what some would call Christianity of the Western World. Christopher Rowland stated it well, "Liberation theology is a way, a discipline, an exercise which has to be lived rather than acquired as a body of information."[52]

Edgar A. Gest stated, "I would rather see a sermon." The Black Church must not just preach liberation, love, and justice and not show that it can be transformational in its teachings. The

[52] Rowland Christopher, Liberation Theology, Cambridge University Press, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, pg. 4

Black Churches must not ignore its classroom obligations to teach diversity, inclusion, regardless of age, sexual orientation or race. This requires creating a community in the classrooms of Christian Education. One way to create a transformative environment in the Black Churches is storytelling. Yes, storytelling! Transformation requires critical thinking and younger generations are taught to think critically and the church has been telling stories from the pulpit for centuries. Academic classrooms have fundamentally changed, and therefore, the Black Church must make the change to become more relevant. Note, Bell Hooks comments about sharing stories, "In all classrooms, even in hard science, professors use stories, usually in the form of anecdotes, to illustrate points to elucidate information that may be abstract. Story, especially personal story is one of those powerful ways to educate, to create community in the classroom.[53] In Christian Education in the Black Church small groups, classrooms, in or out of the church walls cannot be an exception. We must change to be more transformational in the areas of social and equal justice. We have a moment of opportunity based on God's sovereign will to make America and this world multicultural and particularly, the United States. Soong-Chan Rah stated it well, "The American Church today stands at an exciting moment of opportunity and challenge. God, through His sovereign grace, has brought together many nations, ethnicities, and cultures to the North American continent.[54] So, what will the Black Church do with God's Divine will for humanity? Will we be diverse and transformative or stuck in tradition and continue to lose our youth and young adults to the world. How to change?

d. Rethinking Traditional Theology of Christian Education - Curriculum 1 (RPTT).

[53] Hooks, Bell, Teaching Critical Thinking, Practical Wisdom, Routledge, 711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, pg. 55-56

[54] Rah, Soong-Chan, Many Colors, Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church, Moody Publishers, 820 N. Lasalle Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60610, pg. 14

Introduction: Welcome, goals and objectives, explain program: Rethinking Christian education importance for the Black Church in the 21st century. Articulate Biblical references that support the agenda. Genesis 1.26, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." This verse emphasizes the idea that all humans are created equal and in the image of God, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or any other characteristics. Galatians 3.28, "There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave of free; there is no longer male or female, for all one in Christ Jesus." Emphasizes the unity of all people in Christ, regardless of background or current social status. As you explore scriptures that God provides that speak to diversity and inclusiveness, you will discover statements in the Old and New Testaments that reference diversity and inclusiveness. For example, Psalm 82.3 defends the plight of the weak and fatherless and supports the rights of the poor and oppressed. This confirms the importance of defending the marginalized or oppressed. These match exactly what generations X, Y and Z are expressing in their responses to the research in this project. In Proverbs 31.8-9 we are required to articulate the needs of individuals and groups who are unable or unwilling to speak for themselves and for their rights. We place emphasis on those who are destitute. When judging, they must be fair. This requires advocating for anyone who is unable to self-advocate. Finally, in the curriculum, Acts 10.34-35 is an appropriate and significant reference to use when teaching about diversity and inclusiveness as an image of the New Testament Church. God accepts, from all nations, those who fear him and acts in accord with the commandments. God does not discriminate selectively. The scriptures cited above are not exhaustive, they simply

depict that God in the Holy Scriptures demonstrates that the Bible promotes diverse and inclusive justice and encourages us to treat all people with fairness and compassion, and love. The objectives outlined below denote a curriculum based on a train-the-trainer concept, i.e.., (Pastor, Christian Education Leaders, etc.) high-level summaries of training blocks.

Module 1 Train the-Trainer Concepts:

Objective -1 – Explore scripture passages that emphasize inclusivity and justice. Psalm 82.3; 89.14; Isaiah 1.17; Micah 6.8; and Galatians 3.38 are encouraging references.

Objective 2 – Lead Theological discussions on how these principles have applications for age, sexual orientation, and race. The treatment and behaviors around age, sexual orientation and race are discussed throughout the Bible. Sexual Orientation: The Assemblies of God, Baptist, AME, COGIC, Catholic and others believe that homosexual behavior is immoral and comes under the judgment of God. However, passages in the Bible emphasize the importance of welcoming and including all people, regardless of their sexual orientation. Go back to Genesis 1.26; Galatians 3.28. A deeper thought is to ask if there is any degree of sin and are we giving equal attention and judgment to players in the church who have committed adultery, fornication or some other crime. The American Psychological Association also recognizes that sexual orientation is an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or same sex attractions to men, women, or both sexes, and that prejudice and discrimination against lesbians, gay, and bisexual people can impact their mental health. Additionally, if you observe your pews, leadership, choirs and ask the question, is this why Generations X, Y and Z are not drawn to the Black Churches? Is it our Christian duty to tell people that they cannot love differently than we are accustomed to? Sexual orientation is one of the three top reasons our target groups avoid our

Black Churches so, what about race?

Race is mentioned in the Bible but not as an issue, it is information that informs us. The Bible teaches that all people are created equal and that every single person is a child of God and is entitled to receive the full inheritance of heaven. Where, then, is the love and respect Jesus teaches us to follow. Where is the need to vacate judgment of people based on their outward appearance. We don't need to keep the scorecard on these matters. Finally, let's move on to the discussion of age in the Bible, what does it say?

Age is mentioned in the Bible. We learn here that all people, regardless of their age, are created in God's image and are entitled to be recipients of equal personal dignity. Leviticus 19.32 reminds us to stand up in the presence of the aged and show respect to our elders as we revere God. Age discrimination is not acceptable, nor tolerated and while it is typically against the elderly, we must not ignore either group - it has been known to trickle down.

Objective 3 – Group discussions, reflections and conclusions about relevant Bible verses to interest X, Y, and Z generations.

To stimulate interest in these generations to join group discussions about Biblical references, it is important to introduce relevant topics in an environment that is welcoming, inclusive, and respectful of diverse beliefs and perspectives. Black Pastors and Churches must set up a safe space that encourages honest dialogue where everyone feels comfortable sharing their thoughts and opinions. Set ground rules for respectful communication and active listening. It is important to note that active listening occurs in the absence of judgment and defensiveness.

1. Always use examples that are relevant to the (sub) cultures and experiences of the X, Y, and Z generations that enable them to form personal/individual

opinions about the Bible topics. Example: Current events or popular culture to illustrate the principles being shared or discussed.

2. Always encourage participants to ask questions, engage in discussions, and to analyze verses to gain a better understanding of the implied principles being discussed and, ultimately, to assist with fostering a sense of community.
3. Always emphasize the importance of inclusivity and diversity in the Bible and in the group. Amongst the goals here are to instill a sense of empowerment and entitlement.
4. Use technology to engage Gen X, Y, and Z'ers in discussion. For example, use social media to share Bible verses and encourage discussion, or use video conferencing to facilitate virtual group discussions. And, whenever possible, utilize the students' skills and capabilities in the classroom, i.e. using technology, opening sessions with icebreakers, leading break-out sessions, tallying surveys. This will set them up to experience, thus witness, operational definitions of inclusiveness, etc.

Module 2: Understanding Diversity within the Black Churches: Remember the Black churches are diverse and complex institutions that have played a vital role in American History and politics. It is not a monolithic institution. Its members hold varying theological positions and come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, and political affiliations. (pewtrusts.org, Exploring Faith and Black Churches in America)

Objective 1 – Define and discuss diversity, including age, sexual orientation, and race. Many Black Americans attend predominantly Black congregations, yet many believe that

historically Black congregations should diversify rather than preserve traditional racial characteristics. This leads to great debate because rural Black Churches are not the same as Urban Black Churches; in many instances they are not faced with gentrification. (christianitytoday.com, Study: Black Christians See Limits to Multiracial Churches)

Objective 2 – Examine historical perspectives of diversity in the Black Church. Revisit history of the Black Church's Vital role in American politics. You will find that its members have participated in various capacities, especially leadership, in the civil rights movements of the 50's and 60's and even into the 70's where they were staunch and significant advocates for civil rights. A very diverse group of people supported this movement which contributed to many of the gains it realized. This begs the question, what brings about a disconnect that happens after people of all races find it acceptable to fight in the struggles together but, after the protests are over, they separate and choose segregated worship? Example: During wartime, when a bomb or a bullet is flying at the bunker that you share with a person of a different race, are you mostly concerned about their race or about surviving? Using this same scenario, how do we survive together in a corrupt political world in America without coming together as Christ commands? It is productive for people, regardless of their difference, to share stories in a comfortable, non-threatening space within and outside of the Church. You are encouraged to look closely at Module A for Rethinking Practical Theology Curriculum I, with references, for teaching various topics as it relates to motivating youth and young adults to be interested in returning to church. The training will commence with Module 3. Teaching inclusivity through Christian Education in the Black Churches is the topic.

e. Rethinking Christian Education to Attract the Younger Generations

We must be reflective on our journey of rethinking Christian education to attract younger generations to join and participate in our discussions. The ongoing commitment to diversity, inclusivity, intercultural understanding, and social justice within the Black Church must include an ethnographic approach in the church, and other venues, that reveal a welcoming spirit of hospitality. It is also important to gain a basic understanding of WOKE and intersectionality, and history's influence on the 21st century cultural movement. MSMBC acknowledges the need to refocus.

Black churches in the 21st Century suffer from spiritual malnutrition, some resembling 'skin and bones' because they have not come to terms with the 21st century Christian educational deficits, especially those that require action in the areas of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. This is not a new societal issue, Jesus' sermon about justice revealed that ethnic injustices existed then and continue to this day. As Jesus entered the troubled arena of the Greek, and Roman empires, Jesus quotes a passage from the book of Isaiah, as written in Luke 4.18, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to bring the good news to the poor."[55] It is stated that "when the Greeks came into power they tried to ridicule, demean, and supplant Jewish culture and customs."[56] In the language of the laws enacted by States in America by Republican majorities, we see efforts to ridicule, demean and supplant African American, Latino, and Asian cultures through voter suppression, restrictions and removal of books from libraries and schools in Florida. The people in our communities need hope and, because many churches have not provided that hope, church membership diminished in the pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic era. If Jesus opened the scriptures to read the Word of God, in

[55] Shin, Sarah Beyond Color Blind, Intervarsity Press, PO Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426, pg.163

[56] Ibid. pg. 163

the Synagogue, Jesus was practicing the empirical theology of Christian education. We are reminded to follow the example of Jesus Christ and therefore, we must teach the Word God in our churches. Christian education is the best method to use.

Sadly, even though the decline in membership in African American churches has continued, we will not discontinue our quest to turn it around. In the Pew Research Center article by Besheer Mohamed, Kiana Cox, Jeff Diamant, and Claire Gecewicz it is written "that most Black Americans who attend religious services go to congregations where most attendees and the senior clergy are Black. At the same time, many indicate, in their answers to other questions in the survey, that they value diversity in their religious congregations. Even among those who regularly attend Black congregations, a majority say that historically Black congregations should try to diversify rather than preserve their traditional racial character." Given these opinions taken from our survey, the project must address beliefs that indicate spiritual malnutrition is festering in our midst. To remedy this situation, we will utilize the applications we design for Christian education tracks. Churches tend to hold on to spiritual and worship comfort zones that often hinder progress and growth. This suggests that we attempt to address differences apart from Christ. There is a tolerance versus relativism as shared in the book "Defending the Black Faith," "We live in a world of conflicting, sometimes hostile, beliefs, we have no desire to compromise Christ's lordship or our faithfulness to his teachings, yet we do not wish to be offensive to people we care about." Let me make this clearer.

I care about all people and the "Black Church deeply, and if these writings hurt, it is not in concert with our goal to bring reality to our need for tolerance through grace. God has indulged all of us and yet we refuse to be graceful to all of humanity. In addition, most African

American churches have not addressed social justice issues in Jacksonville, Florida or America as we navigate the 21st century. Some will argue that "Black Churches have fought for social justice issues. Show me the real research data and I will share Christianity Today research, "The Black Church, Explained by Pew's biggest Survey of African Americans." An in-depth study of the faith of 8,600 black Americans offers an unprecedented snapshot of their congregations and beliefs before COVID 19 and George Floyd, Jeremy Weber and Morgan Lee on February 16, 2012, shared,

- 4 in 10 now attend[57] a non-black congregation-including half of millennials and Gen Z.
- About half say it's essential for churches to offer "racial affirmation or pride," while only a quarter say sermons on political topics are essential.
- 6 in 10 say black congregations should diversify.
- 6 in 10 say, when church shopping, finding a congregation where most attendees share their race is unimportant.

The question must be asked: why is diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism, and social justice important in African American churches? How do we address the problems we face in a rapidly and a continuously changing society? Because of these changes, the African American Church must rethink its traditional theology through Christian education. Why? Allegedly, the Black church is not declining as rapidly as its White counterparts. There "the gap between the shares of young adults and those in older generations who attend predominantly Black houses of worship." This means that it is important for the Word of God to be relevant to every generation and we need to minister in ways that make these connections.

[57] Christianity Today News and Reporting, February 16, 2021 11:15 A.M.

As we have underscored throughout this discourse, there are a number of reasons that African American churches must revise their Christian education curricula. Some of these reasons include:

The African American community is becoming increasingly diverse. Jacksonville, Florida is not a minority-majority community. The African American community is becoming more diverse in its ethnic and racial makeup, as well as its socioeconomic status. This diversity shift presents new challenges and opportunities for Black Churches, and the church's traditional practices must adapt to the changes it generates. Christian education is essential to assist these adaptations.

Will the proposed changes help with racial healing for the sake of the gospel? In the book "More than Equals," Chapter 4 Who is my Neighbor, "Stripped of all the theological debated and boiled down to its raw essence, Christianity and Christians will be judged by two actions: how much we love God and how well we demonstrate that by loving our neighbor. This is Christianity in a nutshell. But pushing these two great commands to the back pages of our practical theology has allowed Christians to join in with the world in separating along racial lines."[58] to love your neighbor as Christ requires us to transform our minds, hearts and souls.

In contrast, other churches have shut down. Can this be explained as simply a decision to remain with the status quo that advocates traditional theology that ignores the burning social issues that mandate attention to diversity and inclusiveness. Being diverse and inclusive around age, sexual orientation and race requires a heart for racial justice whether a Christian or non-Christian. However, as Christians we are obliged to lead the way through the grace of love. We

[58] Perkins, Spencer and Rice, Chris. More than Equal, InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515, pg. 57

know that there are still gender and racial problems in America, and these problems are also resident in African American churches. Ouch! The failures to address these issues and teach the truth hinders the progress of the gospel. We must wrestle theologically with, exegete, dissect, and look deeply at our love for Christ and our neighbors in the Gospels.

The Books of Acts, Ephesians and Revelation, to name a few, sheds understanding. In the Book of Acts by Luke, Rick Richardson saw on the back side of the hand a view that, "He believed the disciples spoke in many tongues because it was necessary for them to communicate the gospel to the different people who had gathered in Jerusalem." He saw God making a "strategic evangelistic and communication move." On the palm side of the hand cupping all people, Brenda Salter McNeil saw, "the gospel proclamation was accompanied by a reconciled community – a sign that God was at work." She was promoting, and I agree with her, the multiethnic and multicultural dimensions of Acts 2. I have never in my life heard anyone in "Black Church" mention intercultural issues, age, sexual orientation, but I have certainly heard about race issues. Other churches have declined and are dying because they have not opted to become more diverse and inclusive in worship, leadership, and staff. Also, the churches have ignored the need to teach the Gospel that reflects these issues.

Churches must meet the biblical mandates in the scriptures, as written in more detail in this proposal and project. The New Testament Church in Acts 2.1-12 reveals that the birth of the New Testament Church was multicultural. This supports our project proposal for solutions to the lack of diversity, inclusiveness, and social justice. However, our position will require that Black churches rethink their traditional theology beyond polity and address the issues confronting 21st century society and churches. Our dilemma at MSMBC is not different from

many Churches today. This is why we must collaborate with them as we make changes to and deliver theology through Christian education.

- Social justice is a central tenet of some African American churches. The African American church has a long history of fighting for social justice, which is at the core of its identity. By becoming more open to and thus embracing diversity and inclusiveness, African American churches can position themselves to address the social justice issues that are facing the communities they inhabit and serve.

Rapper KRS-ONE, stated of Hip-hop, "pioneers we didn't ask to be, but right then hip-hop changed drastically. People didn't wanna hear old rap sound, we started sampling' beats by James Brown." Earlier in this dissertation we stated, "don't change the message, change the delivery." So, even in Christianity, we don't need to change the message. Rather, we can take advantage of all the new technology, so we are not confined to a chair and desk or a four-wall room. Thus, through media we can exploit many vehicles through which we can attract audiences that we may never face physically.

The use of technology sets up key advantages for us to connect with students of social justice. It assists us in bridging communications gaps and aids in establishing a common language, or building virtual glossaries that simplifies delivering the word of God and accelerates connectivity. So, a significant component of Christian education must include training the trainers in technology with the goal to leverage their skills to match students' capabilities.

Next, let's examine the challenges our church encountered as the case study progressed. Systemic racism in Jacksonville impacts economics, education, healthcare, justice, politics, and

poverty. Youth and young adults live in this environment of systemic racism that surrounds our church and the community. During our discussions, we gave serious consideration to show our Church and other Black churches might contribute to the solutions. We propose the following short- and long-term solutions:

1. Teach youth and young adults, using a strong Christian education program that addresses the spiritual aspects of the scriptures and the issues of diversity, inclusiveness, and social justice with collaboration and intergenerational instructions.

2. Use technology to enhance the instructions and appoint younger youth and adults to be the media specialist for the class.

3. Initiate and build sports programs that enhance diversity and inclusiveness of all ages, sexual preferences and races.

We are intentional about building intergenerational relationships in MSMBC. We do not change the message; we simply change the delivery.

Transformation far exceeds the sermon and salvation. Salvation is the ultimate desired outcome, but in the Word of God, we find Jesus meeting the needs of the people (His church). To meet the needs of youth and young adults, we must form and sustain collaborative relationships in our church and communities. Let me share this illustration, FLY is a very informal term popularized by hip-hop culture that suggests not just style and sophistication but also creativity. The synonym for FLY is stylish. We must be open to, and not threatened by, 'style' expressions of young people mindful that style is not limited to how one dresses or how one speaks. We must be creative in Christian education, and we must not close our minds to

different methods of delivery.

Pew Research indicated, "… conversations highlighted several elements of the Black congregational experience that are particularly important to focus group participants, including the comfort associated with familiar style**s** of worship and music, sermons that are relevant to the distinctive struggles of Black Americans, and avoidance of the discrimination and discomfort that some of them have felt in non-Black religious spaces." Youth and young adults were part of the survey, providing feedback that we can use to communicate with our membership and bring insight to the churches. Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church is no exception. Our history and historical flaws will reveal these facts, yet we must learn from our past sins, repent, and be reconciled to God and humanity as we open ourselves to diversity and inclusiveness to all humans. To channel the words of a troubled Apollo 13, "Houston we have a problem!"

Unfortunately, this is not always the case for churches, and it was not a part of our Church that can be attributed to polity, culture, class, or members who were misinformed scripturally. However, when one recognizes or suspects there is a problem, one must address the issues before they become problematic or the issues could turn into cancer which can cause a ministerial infestation, and cancer kills. One way to do this was to conduct a survey of needs and wants and teach in the book "Autopsy of a Deceased Church." Churches have mixed reputations and struggles in their denominations because of polity, class, and power. Historically, multiethnic, intercultural, diversity and inclusive congregations were not real issues because of racism in America. What am I trying to say? As the lead Pastor of Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church, and as members, we struggled with diversity and inclusion.

Class, polity, and cultural comfort issues also undermine the Church's growth. As the seventh Pastor of a Historical Black Church with a personal air of arrogance, and pride at the time, as the Pastor of a church that was part of the "Black Struggle, diversity and inclusion were not part of Mount Sinai's initial thought processes. Arrogance and self-confidence are closely allied, and, as the Pastor, I had a lot of it. All I could see was growth, caring, loving and desire to serve others. This is not what others in the church desired, because of power, pride and polity. This required me to take a different look at the church demographics, history and a closer look at the membership. The historical documents and pictures contained pictures of a building; a two-story stone church nestled in the heart of the "Black Community." Until 2000, leadership did not integrate diversity and inclusiveness in its mission. This absence of diversity and inclusion plays largely in the history of MSMBC evolution in today's society as we change.

f. Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church Now

The Church was located on the corner of 6th and Lee Streets in the Durkeville/Mount Herman Area. The Church flourished under a dominant conservative middle-class family congregation. Its members were active in local associations, and State and National Conventions. They were eventually cut off from and landlocked by Interstate 95 that was constructed, literally, across the Street. Members refused to walk around the expressway, their parking was reduced, the church was aging, access to the upper floors was not supported by an elevator. Ultimately the church was unable to overcome these problems; it was finally demolished. The congregation's demographics, historical records, pictures, and a conversation with Deacon Joe Bailey, who is currently 93 years old, led to his statement, “things started changing after the expressway and we had postal workers, business owners, teachers, nurses,

and some service industry workers who felt they needed to find a new location." The church members began to go to the suburbs, and some would drive more than 10 miles, as they continue to do today, while others resisted driving the long distance, thus, the membership declined and ultimately split. Deacon Bailey confirmed the Church was a conservative Baptist Church, and Deacon Bailey classified the Church as "elitist." Throughout Mount Sinai's history, the Church had several splits, and after the split in 1998, R. L. Gundy became its Pastor in 1999.

In 1999, Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church was a member of the oldest association in the State of Florida, East Florida, and Bethany Baptist Association, which had strong leaders. However, the association was conservative, not diverse, inclusive, and did not address social justice issues, a problem. The Church was a member of the Florida Progressive Missionary and we slowly pulled out of the association, state and national conventions. MSMBC saw a need to change in 1999 and we have been evolving ever since with a new local exegesis of church, community and our nation.

In the book, Biblical Faith and Black Americans, Thomas stated, "God speaks for himself, …biblical scholars have their workable jargon or special terminology. They have a term associated with proper procedures for rightly interpreting the Bible through proper exegesis." Exegesis is and has been a dark side of leadership that harmed the marginalized in Black Churches and communities because of improper theological training. MSMBC now focuses much more on supporting the marginalized in our local exegesis. Christian education existed and much was learned through BTU and Sunday School lessons however, rightly dividing the word of truth was hindered by misinformation, miseducation, misinterpretation, improper exegetical principles, delusional hermeneutics and improper exegesis principles. MSMBC now

intentionally teaches the Bible verse by verse and chapter by chapter. This improper biblical training that caused attention to diversity, inclusiveness, intercultural acceptance and a failure to address social justice in MSMBC no longer haunts our church.

Subsequently, MSMBC is now intentionally teaching and preaching diversity and inclusion of all people. Church fights caused Church flights and exposed the dark side of Church polity which damaged the members and Church spiritually, financially and unnecessarily. Could it be possible that proper theological and Christian Education training beyond Sunday School books and BTU would have resulted in a different outcome. I believe it could and would have, under proper orthodoxy and application of the dogma that is biblically based and applied, helped alleviate the historical problems that were etched in a stone of non-inclusiveness, male dominance, the new MSMBC no longer allows this practice of discrimination, anti-diversity, and a lack of understanding of age, sexual orientation and race. Through preaching and teaching God's Word, we strategically infuse transformational educational concepts to bring about positive change.

This result supports the notion that social issues must be included in Christian Education training at every opportunity. MSMBC preaches and teaches about the New Jim Crow, New Reconstruction, Woke, Black Lives Matter Movement, Intersectionality, and more, to transform the church. Moreover, we address the social issues of abortion, white nationalism, racism, sexism, economics and education. From a Biblical perspective, MSMBC must be informed, through training, of the reasons that the church of the 21st century does not reflect characteristics of the community? Are we beyond the racial gridlock? Are we a culture of many colors? Do we have the strength to love our neighbors? Are we beyond being color blind? What can "Black"

practical theology through Christian education do to address age, sexual orientation, and race. How do we address healthcare, capital punishment, poverty, globalism, education, intergenerational relations, capital punishment, immigration, incarceration? MSMBC fights against hurting the least, the lost, and left out, known as marginalized, and especially the "Black Female " who has been discriminated against, mistreated and emotionally and physically abused much more than others.

In the book, *Unfinished Business: Black Women, the Black Church, and the Struggle to Thrive in America, Keri Day* asks the question, "Is the Black Church "Home" for Poor Black Women?" Are black churches "homes" or safe "havens" for poor black women or are they becoming religious institutions driven by the larger demands of capitalist society?"[59] At MSMBC we are addressing the plights of all black females.

This dissertation is purposed to address the problems of the generations that have fallen away from MSMBC, the black females, youth and young adults in our church and what we must do to bring them back to Church. We have chosen the methods and methodologies used in Christian education by re-imagining tradition and practice. The praxis of Christian education must have meant, theory, critical reflections, actions and practices and, at MSMBC as we understand and support the need to change. The book "Black Practical Theology states it well, "Firstly, we take "praxis" to denote a kind of reflexive ecology encompassing religions. practices and theology that is informed by theory and guided by values and ultimate purpose(s)."[60] Christian education provides a purpose and orthopraxy, ecclesiastically beyond

[59] Jordan-Fields, Andriette. "Unfinished Business: Black Women, the Black Church, and the Struggle to Thrive in America by Keri Day." *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 34, no. 2 (2014): 224-225.

[60] Andrews, Dale P., Smith Jr., Robert London, Black Practical Theology, Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas 76798, pg. 4

the traditions to achieve a meaningful outcome for humanity through God's word. When I interviewed and surveyed Gens X, Y, and Z at MSMBC, the interviews and surveys resulted in interesting findings that also aligned with the initial research and outcomes prior to the survey which is seen in the curricula below.

The current approach at the MSMBC is to welcome diversity, and inclusion and to ensure belonging. MSMBC is intentionally reaching out to the gentrified community, and engaging Generations X, Y and Z youth. These generations are sharing vital information and adding critical input to the curriculum that stimulates us to usher in positive changes to the church, ministry and leadership. They understand how the principles must be applied to social justice through the heart of grace filled with the love of Christ. In the 21st century, many African American churches will need to be disrupted, then restrained by trained, competent, and practicing theologians. The pastors and churches must combat the new Jim Crow, reconstruction, Woke, Black Lives Matter anti-movement of politicians and right-wing evangelicals, and like MSMBC, model the changes for younger generations.

Movement, Intersectionality and beyond is called for because of the systemic racism and in-your-face discrimination that is plummeting down from the Supreme and State courts which impacts people's lives and livelihood. Our humanity is being compromised by partial laws of voter suppression, equal rights, abortion, nationalism, racism, sexism, and the church must combat these sinful flaws of righteousness as one body in Christ. One body in Christ looks like what we hear young activists stand up and shout, "this is what democracy looks like." The scenes we see in the streets are of people of all ages, sexual orientations and races. Why is it that the church of the 21st century does not look like a community? Are we beyond the racial

gridlock? Are we a culture of many colors? Do we have the strength to love our neighbors? Are we beyond being color blind? How can Black traditional theology, through Christian education address these compelling issues? How do we include healthcare, capital punishment, poverty, globalism, education, intergenerational relations, capital punishment, immigration, and incarceration?

Mount Sinai decided to refocus its vision but kept its mission. We did not change the message, but we changed our delivery towards all people. What instigated this change indirection at MSMBC. His name was Jordan McDougal who would be a Gen Y now if he had lived. As I begin to write this portion of MSMBC now, tears have rolled up in my eyes because of the pain I pray none of you ever experience.

Jordan MacDougal was raised up from a child in MSMBC. Jordan, usher, participated in martial arts, youth activities, Boy Scouts, and was a good student in class. Jordan was gay and as his pastor, I never knew. When he turned 18, he came less frequently, or he came with a friend. His father was physically abusive, and he suffered mental abuse, thus had no support. How did he change MSMBC. As his pastor, word came that he was in the hospital and very sick. I visited Jordan and as I looked at him and said, "Jordan, I did not know you were sick, what's wrong?" Jordan said, "pastor, I have HIV AIDS and I am dying." My heart dropped, my spirit fell, I did not know if I could touch him, (AIDS phobia) and then I asked, "Jordan, I have not seen you, and you come to church and you are gone, why is it you did not come and talk with me?"

Grasp your heart, and you never want this to happen to you as a pastor, Jordan said, "Pastor, I did not think you or the church would accept me." I was at a loss for words, my throat became

dry, and I could only ask for forgiveness, then we prayed. We prayed and I believe he had peace with God, a young man gone and yet so alone. As we say in the pulpit sometimes, the story does not end here. How did Jordan change his pastor (who did not deserve to be his pastor) and the church who did not deserve to be his family. At Jordan's homegoing service, at the end of the eulogy, the question was asked, "I wonder if Jordan would still be alive if he would have felt he could have come to his Pastor and the Church would have accepted Jordan for who he was. It was a Holy Spirit moment at MSMBC, it was a moment of relief, yet grief; a moment to search your heart, yet sad because the question had to be answered by everyone present at the homegoing service. It changed MSMBC forever! Therefore, this project was developed out of a need to be diverse, inclusive, giving, caring, and loving to humanity regardless of age, sexual orientation and race. Jordan belonged to MSNBC, and we did not create the proper environment for him to feel that he did. Belonging is critical to accompany diversity, equity and inclusion.

This dissertation is written to place focus on three key problems, initially, through Christian education. But this is not exhaustive, it is the beginning of a Christian Education pursuit that needs to continue in every church in America, specifically the Black Church. Every past theologian who wrote specifically to the Black church taught something whether good or bad; whether it was accepted or rejected. The praxis of Christian education must have meaningful theory, critical reflections and actions and practices in African American churches. The book "Black Practical Theology states it well, "Firstly, we take "praxis" to denote a kind of reflexive ecology encompassing religions practices and theology that is informed by theory and guided by values and ultimate purpose(s)."[61] Christian education provides a purpose and orthopraxy

[61] Andrews, Dale P., Smith Jr., Robert London, Black Practical Theology, Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas 76798, pg. 4

ecclesiastically beyond the traditions to achieve a meaningful outcome for humanity through God's word.

Some have had HIV AIDS, some have been killed by street violence, some are LBGTQIA+ some are struggling in schools; some are in the church, and we must do more now than before. We save who we can as often as we can. We push education that must be accompanied by mentoring and tutoring. We must be open to listening to them, praying for them and at the same time learn from them. Our children are among us begging for attention and need to know the truth about race and sexual orientation. However, beyond where are the children, we must also ask as the "Masai" would ask, how are the children?

This phrase is often associated with the people of East Africa and often used by Rev. Dr. Wilson Goode of Philadelphia in the Leadership Foundation Amachi program. This greeting of the Masai Tribe reflects their strong sense of community and concern for the well-being of children. We can learn a lot by looking at the Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church of Philadelphia approach to athletics as one of the tools for reaching and teaching children about life and God. To ask how the children are is to essentially ask about the welfare of the youth and the future of the community. The data above provides the insight of the local exegesis of Jacksonville, Florida and provides the necessity for MSMBC to refocus its traditional theology of Christian Education and Discipleship programs to address the children's needs for a better community. As we navigate this process, we must unlearn and relearn and re-imagine solutions.

The question, where are the children and how are the children, highlights concern for the well-being and future of children, but they do so in different ways and cultural contexts. Where

are the children might be a straightforward inquiry about the whereabouts of specific children. In other contexts, it can be a more symbolic or metaphorical question, asking about the state or condition in a broader sense, particularly in relation to their safety, well-being, or future prospects. This is a compelling reason to be intentional about rethinking our current Christian Education. As such, we will position ourselves to develop and implement a curriculum that is faith based in our efforts to determine here and how the children are.

Church perspectives and reflections on culture, age, gender, class, social status, education, family, values, and political praxis are essential. How can the African American Church become more racially inclusive and diversified, and reflect the community it serves? We can use school data to gain an understanding of the condition of the community we serve. The education levels for reading, mathematics, free and reduced lunches, graduation rates, single and foster care populace are documented in those records.

Mount Sinai's local exegesis has a school one block away, the University of Florida Healthcare Campus Hospital, St. John Lutheran across the street, and St. Michael Catholic Church one block west. They are re-energizing to meet the community's needs because both were numerically dead. Our Church needs to join and engage these institutions to partner in evaluating and finding solutions to how we treat and resolve these issues to rethink and repurpose our educational systems.

The Duval County School system demographics reflect the community cultures, and we access this information to determine if our churches look like and serve the demographics of our community? Our school population reflects our community and should reflect our church populace in a servant leader role. We have adopted our neighborhood school and provide

support and services because the challenge statement implies that we must rethink our traditional theology strategies and processes.

These goals and strategies are built around disrupting current practices of the theory of critical reflection between our religious practices, theology, and God's engagement with humanity. Dale P. Andrews and Robert London Smith Jr. stated in their introduction to the book "Black Practical Theology" that praxeological response criticism means "The actual work of practical theology may at times begin with a critical look at inherited theological doctrines or traditional folk tenets of faith…." This project will require rethinking practical theology by critically examining inherent theological doctrines and traditional folk tenets to help refocus the Church towards a more diverse and inclusive congregation. The inputs to solutions must require a situational analysis of our current state; this will reveal gaps in our mission, our education and systems. processes, will help us to reimagine the steps we must take to bridge the gaps that will lead us to workable solutions for the church, the community and all whom we are positioned and commanded to serve. This is a part of the reasons for the goals and strategies of this project. This project has a local and global perspective for positive change to create a beloved community. It should be accomplished through diversity and inclusiveness according to the word of God and this project's scope. However, the research and practicum will provide the ultimate answers. It will be challenging to have ministerial competency without input and support to develop a diverse and inclusive ministry therefore, the site team for this project was diversified.

Our Site Team has one Male European Anglican Mission Pastor, Pastor Paul Hassell.

Our first advisor and Site Team Director was Dr. Willicia Hobbs, a retired Asst School Superintendent who resigned from full advisor duties to attend to other professional duties, replaced by Rev. Dr. D. Lovett Sconiers. A Hispanic female, Annie Rodriguez, is a trained race-relations advocate and corporate diversity consultant. Pastor Bryan Boyd, a 26-year-old seminarian, and computer program expert who addressed the young adult research, removed herself because of other obligations. She was replaced by Rev. Dr. Dee Lovett Sconiers who assumed the responsibility to focus her efforts on children and youth with the goal of establishing a nursery, pre-K and responsibility for Site Team Director and Advisor. Jasmine Harris is a 22-year-old who runs a kindergarten program at MSMBC. The advisors for this project are Rev. Dr. Kenneth Myers, Reformed Baptist Church (Former Member of the Southern Baptist Convention-White ad now reformed Baptist), Rev. Dr. Russell Myers, St. John Lutheran Church, Jacksonville, Florida (Harvard Divinity School Graduate-White), Rev. Dr. Paul Brown, Sr.) President/Dean, Phillips School of Theology, ITC-Black), and Rev. Dr. Susan Smith, an ordained (Pastor of Advent United Church of Christ musician, writer and activist who lives in Columbus, Ohio and #BlackChurchHERSTORY -.)Black Female). She is a graduate of Occidental College in Los Angeles, California, the Yale Divinity School, M.Div., and United Theological Seminary where she studied under the late Rev. Dr. Samuel Dewitt Proctor and Rev. Dr. Charles Booth. As this project is researching, it will require a diverse and inclusive team that demonstrates ministerial competency, strong administrative skills, strategic planning, organizing, leading, and ability to apply critical thinking to all components. One must be a model as well as design and adopt a model to follow for quality control, strategic planning, management skills, and leadership model the way that is caring, considerate, creative, adaptable

relational, and the capability to develop teams that are inclusive and diversified. Changes do not happen without courage in decision-making, disrupting and challenging systemic policies and behaviors that evoke change within and outside the African American churches. This project will be shared as a benchmark so that others can extract what they need to help authenticate leadership values as part of ministerial competency.

MSMBC is better now than when I arrived in 1999. Extensive remodeling and improvements have occurred throughout the Church edifice. This includes the fellowship hall, kitchen, classrooms, grounds, roofs on both buildings, added two inherited properties and upgraded maintenance of all. In addition, we have partnered to restructure ministries, social media, and message delivery. As a result of these changes, and because of the efforts of an inclusive body of work, we have moved into the 21st century in meaningful ways with Generations X, Y and Z showing up and becoming members. We are reminded of previous years. Why? because we are rethinking our practical theology of Christian Education and attempting to become more diverse, inclusive, multicultural to attract Generations X, Y, and Z and applying the principles of this project. Even those interviewed needed to be diverse.

g. Rethinking Traditional Theology through People Interviewed and Demographics

The Elder and Senior Deacon of the Church Joe Bailey Sr. is 92 years old and has been a member of MSMBC since he was 11 years old. Joe has impacted my life and ministry tremendously. In our interview on diversity, he stated, "we should not become too diverse because they (meaning whites) would take over. You would have to understand his life experience at 92 as it relates to race relations. His history however, besides being an Army Veteran and working at the U. S. Postal Service, includes his youth and therefore, he

understands the need to continue this work to maintain and sustain teaching them about God. He also stated, "I have been under every pastor this church has ever had with the exception of the founder and B. J. Lane and you are the two best pastors this church has ever had. The other pastors did the best they could but the days of going along to get along are over. People without a vision (visionary) in the church will perish."

Sis. Deloris Gordon, who is 74 years old, has been a member of MSMBC for 27 years. She also chairs the Deaconesses, Hospitality, and Usher III. The mother of 3 daughters and grandchildren who are or continue as members of MSMBC, she works with youth in the school system in the language arts area. Sister Gordon intends to continue to dedicate her time helping to grow the church through her support of diversity and inclusiveness.

Sis. Patricia Rogers, whose father was the Pastor, Rev. B. J. Lane has been a member of MSMBC for at least 52 years. She enjoys working with youth, specifically the youth choir. As an active member she is committed to the church and has expressed the need to listen to and hear what the younger generations are saying. She has also expressed her commitment to meet people where they are as it relates to LBGTQIA+.

Sis. Nicole Wilson is a 50-year-old Gen X and native of Jacksonville, Florida. She adopted her son and is the caregiver of her grandmother Sis. Betty Goodman who raised her. She has been a member of MSMBC for 23 years. She works in hospitality and is the Senior Advisor to the Youth Ministry where she exhibits solid leadership skills and exceptional interpersonal skills. She has been a victim of abuse and as an overcoming she found refuge in Church.

Ronald Harris Jr. is a 19-year-old Gen Y native of Jacksonville, Florida. He has been a member of MSMBC for 10 years and became a Boy Scout at a very early age and worked in the

Youth Ministry as an Usher, Rapper, and worked as a mentor to youth during Wednesday activities. He lost a brother to community violence and committed himself to being successful in his life.

Alexia Alderman is an 18-year-old Gen Y interracial female and has been a member of MSMBC for at least 10 years. She has always participated in the Youth Ministry and has participated in the choir, mime, step and drama ministries. She has a twin Sister and recently entered college. She is a native of Callahan, Florida and was raised by her grandparents.

Christina Beasley-Harris, a 45-year-old Gen X, Black female. She is a native of Jacksonville and a victim of abuse who lost a son to community violence. She has been a member of MSMBC for more than 10 years. She works with the Youth Ministry and is now the Director of the Culinary Ministry. She is trained in behavioral health support and will use her skills to assist in our Mental Health Ministry.

Eric Dupree is a 35-year-old Millennial and native of Jacksonville, Florida. He is a life member having been at MSMBC since birth. He attended school and worked with people of different cultures, and he is not Co-Director of the Media Ministry. At a younger age he also participated in and worked in the Youth Ministry.

Another baby boomer, Deacon. Randal Malpress who has been a member of MSMBC for decades is the Vice-Chair of the Deacons Ministry and has served as a Trustee.

Amaya White is a 19-year-old, Gen Z and a frequent visitor to MSMBC. She has graduated from high school and is looking forward to attending college. She is a non-member of MSMBC.

Maliek Wilson, age 17, is a Gen Z Black male who is a member of MSMBC and native of Jacksonville. He is a High School athlete, and he serves as an Usher, and youth mentor.

Jasmine Green is a 22-year-old, is a Gen Y Black female who recently graduated from college plans to pursue her training to become a Childcare Director. She is a native of Jacksonville, Florida and part of a large family of siblings. She is not a member of MSMBC but served on the Site Team.

Bryan Boyd is a 27-year-old Gen Y Black male and MSMBC member. He is a computer engineer, programmer and ordained clergy. Bryan, a project site team member who got married recently, and is starting a virtual ministry. Pastor Boyd served on the Site Team.

Chantrell Chance is a 45-year-old Gen X female and native of Jacksonville, Florida. She is a single Black mother of 4. She has been a member of MSMBC for over a decade.

Terrance James McGruder Jr. is a 22-years- old Black male and a nonmember of MSMBC. He is a merchant seaman, whom I mentor. He was raised without a father and his mother spent some time incarcerated. Terrance attends the church when he is not on the ship.

Each of the participating members and non-members underwent interviews and participated in surveys. In each setting, they offered very valuable information to this project on how to attract and bring the younger generation to MSMBC. Findings are summarized below in the same order they are described above.

Chapter 4 The Findings

Chapter 4 provides the result of our survey findings. The chapter contains transcripts/summaries of interviews conducted with four respondents of generations X, Y, Z, and Millennial totaling twelve respondents who provided feedback to our surveys and questionnaires and interviews articulating how the Black Church can appeal to people of their generation to return or remain in the Black Church. The respondents' demographics are

provided solely to gain insight into who they are as members or nonmembers of MSMBC. Additionally, this chapter will provide perception from elder's Christian educational goals that are age, sexual orientation, race and multiculturalism around the issues of social justice. The interviews that follow were conducted independently and collectively in small groups with a clear understanding that the information that we extracted from their input would be used as part of this research project. Finally, it will explain that the project addresses the needs for MSMBC change its Christian educational structure to align with its strategies and meet its stated goals to address social justice.

Research methods used for this proposal were ethnography, action research, and observations. It has some statistical analysis and interviews to help determine how important rethinking the traditions of the practical theology of Christian education and to attract generations X, Y, Z, and Millennials to return to the church. Additionally, I wanted to know what they thought were important issues for the Black Churches. Finally, we conducted observations at two Historical Black Churches, one mega and one small church, and one intercultural church and a small welcoming church. Our outcomes were measured by the input of Generations X, Y and Z on how the Black Church should rethink the Practical Theology of Christian Education and compared it to Chapter 3 above.

Each person surveyed and interviewed was asked to be open and honest about their opinions and recommendations and that their names would not be used if they chose not to. Each participant signed a release form for the project. After they were instructed in writing they proceeded to complete the survey, answer questions and provide demographic data. There were three independent groups, Gen X, Gen Z and Y with a total of twelve. The millennials were

interviewed, and comments will be included for further insight. The respondents were told in my initial research, it has been discovered that unless the Black Churches in America and MSMBC doesn't change as we know it today, it will not exist. They were told there must be a fundamental change in what we teach in Christian Education and what is preached to meet the news of all of humanity. If America is going to be saved, it must address social justice issues. This is the final dissertation work for my Doctoral program and your help is needed. Your personal information will not be used or shared without permission and secured. If you do not want me to use your names, I will use pseudonyms to protect their identity. Each respondent chooses to allow their names to be used.

a. The Respondent's Results - Rethinking Traditional and Practical Theology:

The respondents and members were asked what MSMBC could do to increase attendance in their age group. This led to a discussion and dialogue on diversity, inclusion and during a leaders' conference some of the X, Y, Z and Millennials themselves felt it is important for intergenerational dialogue with the elders of MSMBC. They further provided input below of what they felt was important to attract Generations X, Y, Z, and Millennials.

1.) The Respondents Demographics

Respondent 1 - Nicole Wilson Generation X is 50 years old. She is the Directress of the Youth Ministry of MSMBC and a member for 23 years. She develops skits, Christmas plays, and Resurrection (Easter) plays and activities. Directress of the Hospitality Ministry and loves the Lord.

Respondent 2 - Ronald Harris Jr., Generation Z is an 18-year-old Black male. He is a recent high school graduate and in October 2023 was inducted into the Eagle Scouts. He has worked

with youth and faced the tragedy of losing a brother to gun violence. He has participated in the Youth Ministry for over a decade as a rapper, usher and youth mentor.

Respondent 3 - Alexia Alderman, Generation Z is 18 years old and a recent high school graduate who is interracial. She has been a member of MSMBC for over a decade and her mother passed away at a younger age. She has worked in the Youth Ministry Makalah, Mime, Step and Youth Choir.

Respondent 4 - Christiana Harris Generation X is the Directress of the Culinary Arts Minister at MSMBC. She works with youth as part of the Youth Ministry. As a mother, she has dealth with the loss of a son to community gun violence. She is also trained in emotional support for grieving mothers.

Respondent 5 - Eric Dupree Millennial. Eric Dupree is 35 years old, and he has been a member of MSMBC most of his life. He is the Co-Director of the Media and Sound Ministry.

Respondent 6 - Jamaya White, Generation Y, age 19. The interview with this Y generation female was very eye opening as a guest of the church. Jamaya was an invited guest to our meeting and provided a neutral opportunity for inquiry.

Respondent 7 - Maliek Wilson Generation Z, is a 16 year old high school student and an athlete. He has been a part of the Youth Ministry for over a decade. He has mentored younger youth and worked around MSMBC consistently.

Respondent 8 - Jasmine Green a Gen Z, 21 year old Black female and not a member of MSMBC, however, she is a Site Team member for this dissertation.

Respondent 9 - Bryan Boyd age 27 Gen Y, one of MSMBC's Associate Pastor's and Site Team member, who recently started his virtual church provided valuable information for this

dissertation.

Respondent 10 - Shantrell Chance 45 years of age Gen X, she shared we need a strong Youth Ministry and a youth minister or Pastor that understands the generations today. Have youth to do public service and participate in sports events. The issues of age, sexual orientation and race should be addressed because everyone comes to worship God.

Respondent 11 - Zy-mire Jayman is an Alpha Generation youth at the age of 13, Zy'mire feels that MSMBC should start a sports program to attract the younger generation because kids my age like to play football and basketball. By starting a sports program this will help the Black Community Youth to stay out of the streets and stay close to God.

Respondent 12 - Terrance James McGruder Jr Generation Z is a 22-year-old non-member who sees that many people his age are not serious about church and feel privileged.

2.) The Respondents Recommendations

a,) What did the Gen X'ers share?

The Gen Xer's shared after they were allowed to review RTTPT 1 and discussion, they provided recommendations to the curriculum practicum objectives for rethinking practical theology of Christian Education to become more diverse, inclusive and how to address age, sexual orientation and race. They were pleasantly surprised that some of the proposals in RTTPT one was the same as they had proposed in RTTPT two. However, before they were able to see RTTPT one, Practical Theology of Christian Education was defined and discussed and what the project was trying to accomplish. A follow up meeting was conducted on October 8, 2023, in a social and safe gathering to exercise the proposal without their knowledge. Again, they were pleasantly surprised at the setting, food and drink and Generation X and Y stated this

is good and we should do this more often. The Generation X respondent felt that there should be basic mechanical skills, and how to maintain an automobile through intergenerational methods. There is a need to sit and engage Gen Y, Y and Z'ers and develop activities around them and the acceptance of the youth and young adults no matter what race or gender they are. We must be more welcoming to and engaging without judgement. She expressed the need for emotional support and mental health, small group discussions, and debate teams. Younger generations should be taught business ethics, how to take care of a home, cooking skills, appropriate sex education and a specific course that provides an intergenerational course for elders with youth.

Generation X and Millennials made it clear that to attract youth and young adults we must engage in public service to the community, publish our efforts on social media and be consistent. It is important to see people as worshipers of God and treat everyone as children of God. There should be no judgment of and an intentional effort to preach and teach people to love their neighbors. It was very important to the Generation X respondents to address emotional and mental health needs, inclusivity of leadership and small group socialization and classes. Finally, collaboration and innovation with inclusivity of all people regardless of their background. The word of God should be delivered with truth.

When speaking with Christina Beasley-Harris who is 45 years of age and a Gen X the question was asked, how can we engage young adults and attract them to become members of MSMBC? Her reply was, don't judge people, accept them where they are. Also, pastor, allow them to get involved and engage in leadership of the church and do activities outside of the church in the community. However, there must be teaching and preaching in the church about loving your neighbor, emotional support and help with those grieving from the loss of children

to gun violence etc.

b.) What did generation Y'ers share?

The Y generations expressed their interest in business development and continuous technology changes saying, "our generations and those behind us will be technology driven," our Church must be ready. It is essential that youth activity is consistent, and sports activities are used to attract people their age and younger. They also felt age-appropriate sex education should be taught to help protect and encourage a lifestyle that would be appropriate for their age and according to the Word of God. Generation Y made it clear to attract their generations social media was extremely important to them as well as diversity and inclusion regardless of age, sexual orientation or race. They expected to be provided guidance and authentic leadership. They were very adamant that the Black Church must stop judging people because they are Gay and use social media as a way to address age, sexual orientation and race. If you mean what you say, put it on your website and other media platforms.

As a Y Generation teenager, Jamaya was asked, what can MSMBC do to be diverse and inclusive of people regardless of age, sexual orientation and race. She replied churches are judgmental towards people who were gay and the dress of young people. It should not be that way! I believe the church should stop judging people and teach the truth of the Bible. They should teach people how to own and run a business and have social gatherings in and outside of the church. They should use social media to help draw attention to the church. She shared that mental health awareness, small business workshops, and younger people were not comfortable with the black church because of being judged. However, she made it clear that older people need to provide guidance and some people are, however, not prone to constructive criticism.

The last Gen Y Terrence McGruder stated "to attract people his age requires media presentation, truth and authenticity of leadership. He admitted that his generation feels privileged, and some do not want to work, however, speaking truth to power and truth in the word of God is essential. You can attract my generation by being authentic and nonjudgmental.

c.) What did the Z'ers share?

Generation Z stated, "Youth and Young adults should be taught how to organize church and community around issues for positive change. They saw social and equal justice to be extremely important for the Black Church. This led to further discussion about mental health, and sexual orientation. All of those who were surveyed were very vocal about Black History and two of the respondents of Gen Z were interracial. The Z Generation was concerned about social events at church, sports, dialogue with youth, technology, sports and MSMBC being open to LBGTQIA+. Don't just say you are open, show that you are. One response to the question, what can we do to attract youth your age indicated MSMBC should go back to having youth activities and events in the church. When asked what those activities and events should be, the reply was, movies, fellowship outings, sports, and specific youth fellowship in the church. They specifically stated, "we should continue to have this dialogue with youth to allow us to engage in the activities of the church and teach us how to become leaders and teach Black History."

There is a need for programs for youth that begins with grades 5th through 9th for boys and girls appropriate for their age in churches. Specifically, sports activities for girls, which were basketball, flag football, track and volleyball, and for boys and girls.

Alexia was asked, how can MSMBC engage and attract youth to MSMBC? She replied

immediately, “make people feel comfortable when they come to church.” She shared that MSMBC should focus more social media to attract the youth, and it should not matter if a person is LBGTQIA+ or not, they are all human and the church should be welcoming to everyone. She also said, teach what the Word of God says about people, LBGTQIA+ that is age appropriate. She further wrote that emotional support could save lives and a lot of people don’t know how to give it, and she quoted Romans 14.1 which says in the NRSV “Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.” It is important to have a strong social media presence because Gen Z and every generation after us will be driven by technology and social media. Post clips of sermons or speak on the platform directly. As far as the elders go, “I feel a lot of them are stuck in their ways. But some have felt the exact same way the newer generations feel now and now that it's acceptable to think the way we do, they have changed or expressed how they think more freely. I grew up with my grandparents and they have shown me how open elders are to changing their ways.

Jasmine Green replied that the Black church should be more diverse, inclusive and address the issues of age, sexual orientation, and race through social justice by connecting with the community and conducting community-based activities through outreach with cookouts, potluck dinners, and providing teenagers with safe space. She also shared that the church must address these issues from a biblical worldview because the generation is looking for truth through preaching and teaching with the acceptance of people for who they are. It is important to reach us through social media and have open doors and hearts that are welcoming. This will provide a space in which people will come because of the perception that the Black Church is stand offish. Make sure that MSMBC teach more about identification in Christ and teach people

how to discipleship people people of different races.

Pastor Bryan Boyd stated social media is an absolute essential tool needed to reach the generations today. This way MSMBC can reach people globally to fulfill the vision of the Church, and show that we are diverse, inclusive to address the issues of age, sexual orientation and race through a media platform that is brief, small groups and pushes the Church's events.

d.) What did the Millennials share? As the most notable diverse adult generation in American history must be given attention in the Black Church. They stated, "if the Black Church wants to attract our generations the congregation must be taught why LBGTQIA+ should be safe in the church, placed on the church's website as a form of inclusiveness in the church along with athletic for younger people, events, and social gatherings in and out of the church. They recommended that congregations should not condemn others and that usage of Bible verses should be used to teach and preach about judging people. The Respondents also believe that congregations realize that young people and adults are not perfect Christians and conversations should be held to express these subjects of sin and accept all people for who they are which was a discussion around LBGTQIA+. The respondents also want to discuss the issues of church and community and how to develop business opportunities as well as how to develop a career building path based on their interest as a way to stay connected to the church.

The question was asked of Bro Eric Dupree, how do we reach the millennial generation in MSMBC? He replied that MSMBC must be a church that is welcoming and inclusive of all people regardless of background. The church must be non-judgmental and allowed to be actively engaged in church and have opportunities for leadership. He felt that the church should be collaborative and innovative with other members of the church. He also felt that it was

important to consistently deliver the truth to the people regardless of the reaction. Comfort will not always be the outcome of every sermon or church interaction, so teaching honesty and relatable situations will foster an accepting environment. This proved to be true as it relates to a baby boomer of MSMBC, Dea. Randal Malpress who has been a member of MSMBC for decades. He shared that my preaching and teaching truth about tolerance had changed his perspective about judging people who were LBGTQIA+ and he was better off as a result and felt as though churches and our church in particular should be welcoming of all humanity. Our requirement is to love people and not judge them.

e.) What did the elders share?

Three elders responded to a survey and provided a needed insight as pillars of MSMBC. Deacon Joe Bailey: Deacon Bailey Sr. is the Senior Elder and Senior Deacon of the Church at 92 years old and has had a tremendous impact on my life and ministry. When I asked him how he felt about the church becoming more diverse, he replied, not too diverse! This led to further conversation as one of the pillars of MSMBC. He would describe how hard it was for him as a "Black Man" in Jacksonville and facing discrimination. Subsequently, he was hesitant about diversity in the church. He is one the founder of Little League Baseball league in Jacksonville and understands the need to work with youth to grow the church and bring the youth to Christ.

Sis. Deloris Gordon, a baby boomer born in 1940's and asked her about youth involvement in the church and how we can change to be more inclusive of young people in a worship experience. She replied, Pastor, I am old school and changing the music and worship to accommodate the younger generations is a struggle for me, and they don't put any money in the church. I spoke with Sis. Deloris Gordon who is 74 and has been a member of MSMBC for 27

years and serve as the Chairperson of the Deaconess, Hospitality, Usher III. She works with youth in the school system and has three daughters and grandchildren of which most are or were members of MSMBC. She helps students with language art in school. She has expressed interest in church growth through diversity and inclusiveness regardless of age, sexual orientation or race. Finally, during a workshop for the youth ministry, Sis. Patricia Rogers who worked with the youth choir and ministry, and whose father was the previous Pastor, Rev. B. J. Lane, we asked what we can do to engage more youth. She began to share the following, "Pastor, we must do something, we need a youth Pastor, and engage them because we are getting old, and this church cannot survive without youth and younger adults.

3.) What were the outcomes of the respondent's recommendations?

What where the outcomes of the respondent's recommendations RTTPT 1 vs RTTPT after these recommendations, I gathered important information on what MSMBC needs to do to attract Generations X, Y, Z and Millennials. When the project was executed, we understood that we needed to analyze whether RTTPT 1 was valid. We asked asked, what did we do right, where did we fall short of our goals, and how will we mitigate any issues we encountered? The results would indicate a need to evaluate the lessons learned, then determine what corrective is needed, i.e., revise training, update plans, restart process with inclusion of updated best practices for our new program. As part of the curriculum/toolkit, we created a Christian Education Quality Control Chart and Management Cycle to accomplish our goals. See the models below that contain a quality control map and model adopted from the U.S. Army Training Management and Operations course at Fort Moore, Georgia in 1987. APPENDIX B was reviewed to helps me to determine changes needed to address the target groups' input from RTTPT 1 vs RTTPT 2.

a.) Year 1 - It will be very important to share the respondents' responses to leadership in the church which would be inclusive of all leaders.

b.) Year 1 - Conduct small group meetings with elders of the church and share the responses with each elder of at least 80%. Find ways to incorporate leadership inclusions.

c.) Year 1 - Intentionally start a preaching calendar around the issues of the responses and meet with all ministers in the church, and Christian Education director and look at the curriculum to incorporate the responses within the curriculum based on the Word of God.

d.) Year 1 - Update the Church website, and other social media platforms to reflect the responses after sharing with elders, leaders, and all members (Gen X, Y, and Z)

e.) Year 1 - Began the discipleship training around the issues of diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism and address the issues of age, sexual orientation, and race as it relates to social justice. The calendar will include mental health, emotional support, and retreats.

f.) Year 1 training and church calendar completed using the church management cycle and total quality management processes and execution of the plan with Gen X, Y and Z.

Year 1 and 2 are progressive years of implementation and leadership changes, workshops and building additional support of the plan. We have already begun our initial efforts as of November 2023. The pivotal point will be November 2024 as we evaluate what has been accomplished. Some of the suggestions provided by the Generations so far are already being used and we are seeing the fruits of the labor as recently people are beginning to join the Church and their siblings. Youth activities kick started in November 2023 with children, youth and Generations X and Y present. The calendar for 2024 and 2025 will have a great deal of input from each generation in this survey. The leadership conference in November received some

initial information on the respondents' input and were excited to see where we are headed. This project will work with patience and commitment to change.

g.) Year 3- Assess the execution of the plan, conduct an after-action review, retrain where needed and continue a strong discipleship plan based upon the recommendations.

h.) Year 3- It will be essential to incorporate into the new disciple classes the goals and objectives of Year 1 and provide discipleship training.

i.) Year 3- Upgrade social media platforms as needed and preach and teach discipleship that is diverse, inclusive, multicultural, and social justice related.

j.) Year 3 - Make sure the calendar is married to activities, events, socials and small groups that are diversified, inclusive with input from Generations X, Y, and Z input. k.) Year 3 - The goal is to have at least 5 to 10 % of the Church populace to be multicultural which means, Haitians, Bahamians, Caucasians, and Hispanic, even if this means a separate service and time.

l.) Full implementation of mental health and emotional support ministry with continuous training.

m.) Year 4 to 5 - Will be the years of mission accomplished and sustainability efforts with total leadership inclusion and diversity. This includes an LBGTQIA+ ministry to address their specific needs. This will require research and hopefully by year two to three it will be flourishing.

Therefore, RTTPT - 1 must be integrated into RTTPT - 2 as an essential part of our worship experience and ministry diversity and inclusions.

1. The Generations X, and Y are on board with the changes and have begun to express

their willingness to be a part of the change simply because they are being included in decision making and see the need for changes for MSMBC. They have also expressed their willingness to assume positions of leadership in the Youth Ministry, Culinary Arts Ministry, and support for intergenerational guidance. Participation in mental health and emotional support remains a top issue.

b. Respondents Outcomes of Rethinking Traditional Theology of Christian Education

Based on the research of the generations X, Y, Z, A and millennials there are a few module changes that should be made to the curriculum. Some of them looked at the original curriculum/tool kit and made specific add on or changes which will be provided below first. . It was very important to the X, Y and Z generations that there be safe spaces in the Black Church. There should be an intentional effort to let youth, young adults, and LBGTQIA+ to know that the Church is a safe space.

The respondents in each session in the separate groups each felt that young adults and the congregation need to be taught diversity comfort classes as a way of developing relationships and respect for each other. The respondents were very excited about being taught leadership skills and felt that emotional support (mental health) courses are needed to address what youth and young adults are facing in society regardless of age, sexual orientation and race. As part of attracting youth and young adults they should be taught how to engage and entertain youth and more adult activities to build intergenerational relationships within the church, which they felt were essential.

Therefore, youth and young adults will be taught how to engage and entertain youth activities to build intergenerational relationships. When discussing Black History with Gen X

and Y, they thought it was very important to teach Black History monthly in the Black Church which led to the multicultural question of what about other ethnic backgrounds. The response was to be inclusive of all races, but it is essential that Black History is taught. In further conversation with Gen X who are in the workforce, they felt it was essential to teach business ethics to young people as part of the Youth Ministry. Additionally, Gen X thought skills should be taught from a Biblical perspective, life skills and culinary skills as part of a right to passage.

Generation X, and Y stated youth should be taught age-appropriate sex education classes to prevent diseases and death, home economic skills for maintaining self as an adult. There was a big push for training youth on how to debate, dialogue and have civil discourse on social justice issues such as police abuse, and unfair treatment of all humans. Finally, they all felt the recommendations changed Rethinking Practical Theology one some and provides a better insight on how to attract Generations X, Y and Z through Christian Education. See Appendix C of what a teaching curriculum would look like as a resource. How could or would this impact MSMBC?

Our findings in RTTPT-2 provide evidence of the need to make updates in RTTPT-1. The input from Generations X, Y, Z, Millennials and the one Alpha provided essential recommendations that required MSMBC to properly assess our needs and what we could share with other Black Churches. MSMBC is committed to implementing changes that contribute to its growth spiritually, numerically, financially, through diversity, inclusiveness and multiculturalism. Subsequently, the input from the Generations X, Y and Z verified RTTPT - 1 and their input became additional RTTPT - 2 provided the how to connect perspective of the

desire to Rethink the Practical Theology of Christian Education to become diverse, inclusive, multicultural, and address ages, sexual orientation and race through the lens of social justice. RTTPT - 2 was focused on what to do without a close look at social justice but their outcomes clearly are inclusive of LBGTQIA+ as a "love your neighbor" from a gospel perspective. Many of the objectives were similar and each one of RTPT - 2 proposals provided an essential component for the curriculum with exponential growth potential. This provided an argumentative premise of truth that some may argue is not needed but we found it to be a key element for MSMBC and the Black Church growth. RTTPT - 2 has made RTTPT - 1 a living constitutional structure that can be augmented with basic principles and laws of God, not a nation or state but if implemented properly it would guarantee certain rights under God to all of humanity in reshaping customs and traditions as a revolutionary move towards Revelations 7 of all tribes and nations being inclusive under, through Jesus Christ. and under God.

Chapter 5 – Ministerial Competencies

In this chapter I will provide Site Team analysis of my leadership and learn from ministerial competencies of the site team and outcomes that impacted this project. Additionally, this chapter will provide the limitations in this project that should and will be considered for now, and future research and book publishing.

MSMBC's change in its philosophy of Christian Education is to its advantage for addressing all of the components of social justice. The Site Team observations were significantly revealing to my leadership style. In our efforts as a church to make sure we practice what Jesus taught, questions about our local theology required answers to moral and ethical questions about self and church. One question posed is, when is it essential to do what Jesus practiced? Love for our

neighbors. What does the Lord require of us when the governing body has left the poor out of equal and true justice? Subsequently, social justice is essential to African American churches and ministry efforts at Mount Sinai Missionary

Baptist Church (MSMBC). The desire to lead by example and rethink our traditional practice of our theology of Christian Education is a direct reflection of the Pastor's leadership as shared by the Site Team and survey respondent recommendations and assessments.

A. Ministerial Competencies

1. As an Administrator

The Church developed a separate Community Development Corporation as a Christian-based Leadership Foundation that is Christian social justice focused. We engage in housing, business development, family, civic engagement, mentoring, youth activities, voter registration, voter education, and voter participation programs. We also engage in parenting, martial arts, cyber technology training, and absentee fathers. Dr. Willie Francois stated in his class presentation, "Lack of knowledge regarding purpose does not cancel our purpose." As a newly installed Pastor in April 1999, it was discovered very early that we needed to help MSMBC discover its purpose, and we formed ministry teams to assess where we were and who we should be for Christ. Purposefully, "Impacting lives for eternity through the Word of God " came out of the vision and purpose development. The purpose is to glorify God through economics, education, social, spiritual, and political awareness strategies as a church with spiritual and social justice applications. What came from this early approach to team and ministry development at MSMBC? The Church learned our mission and vision for God were to help care for the less fortunate, and we committed to staying in the inner City to impact lives for

God. This mandated "building a better church as theologically revealed in 1 Corinthians 12.12-24. The more one knows about their leadership, the better leader one can be at building relationships. As part of the administrator's duty, this required the following.

1. Develop and document all ministry duties and responsibilities, as an Operating Procedures manual.
2. Develop an annual executive summary using input from a church survey to focus on priorities that are measurable long-term, short-term and near-term goals.
3. Develop a strategic plan of long-term, short-term and near-term objectives as a Church management cycle. (See Appendix A)
4. Amend the constitution and bylaws; establish a Trustee Board of Directors and apply for a legalized State entity in Florida.
5. Document a Policy and procedures manual for church administration; include tools -, form letters, routing slips, and task slips.
6. Organize a Church Discipline Team to address issues that were in violation of the by-laws and/or conflict within the church.
7. Change all boards to ministry designation and collectively develop vision and mission statements.
8. Design and develop worship service programs and trustee financial accountability procedures.
9. Transfer all financial reporting to a certified public accountant to ensure compliance with the IRS annually.
10. Conduct annual church meeting for the approval of annual calendar, activities, programs and

have all members sign for the church by-laws annually.

2. As a Counselor: He has established specific times for membership to engage the pastor acknowledging an open-door policy. On mental health issues, when detected, they should be referred to agencies or if spiritual counseling is needed look at the following:

1. When conducting spiritual counseling or during pastoral care, always provide a verbatim document for legal purposes and future reference and referrals.
2. Marital counseling is mandatory for members who use MSMBC and engage pastors. Counseling is a six-week process that includes personality assessment worksheets.
3. My Journey: The journey to ministry started at five years old and developed over a period of 23 years before yielding to the call of God to ministry. At age 12, I wrote a love letter to my present spouse, and it was a sermon. Until I was 18 years of age, I was a member at St. Stephens A.M.E. Church, Jacksonville, Florida. My grandmother, Minnie Lee Gundy, also a member, stated that I would always be at St. Stephens. I was raised in a matriarchal family with a great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother in the same house for many years. My spiritual background came from my grandmother, (Ma Minnie). My mother, Willie Lee, was the first child to attend college at HBCU Edward Waters College. She was a dietitian and she encouraged me to go to college. When I graduated from Englewood High School in June 1972 in Jacksonville at age 18. Two weeks later I left Jacksonville to work in Washington DC at the FBI in the Identification Department. There, I worked one year and later joined the U.S. Army from 1973 to 1993 when I retired as Sergeant First Class. During my tenure in the military, I was married for nine years, divorced, and, in 1982, at the age of 28, I married my current wife of 43

4. years. Wallette was my third-grade classmate to whom I wrote my first sermon. In the same year, I was baptized at St. Thomas Missionary Baptist Church; it was there that I yielded to my call by God to the ministry in September.

While in the Army I attended various colleges and universities and eventually graduated from Troy University. During my tour of duty in Fort Riley Kansas, I received my license to preach at Custer Hill Gospel Worship Service conferred by Captain Clarke McGriff. Soon after, Captain McGriff was ordered to a new assignment. Upon his departure, he directed me to apply for ministerial training at Second Missionary Baptist Church. There, I met Rev. Walter Long who became my mentor and who challenged me with one direct statement, "Bro. Gundy, God does not need any dumb preachers, you should go to school." It was always my dream to finish college. So, I attended school from 1983 until 1990. I attended college until I received a college degree. Upon leaving Fort Riley, KS, I was assigned to Fort Benning, GA, and ministered there for one year.at Galilee Baptist Church before departing for Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church in Columbus Georgia. At Mt. Pilgrim, Rev. James C. Harris Sr. was my mentor. He trained me to lead devotions, prayer meetings, business meetings and to strengthen my skills in ministry as the youth minister. Importantly, he taught me how to love members of the congregation. In 1991, I enrolled in Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) Morehouse School of Religion where I studied for one year, then deployed to South Korea. There, I started the Camp Long Gospel Service and subsequently, applied to the Baptist Association in Georgia to sanction Messiah Missionary Baptist Church. Upon my return from South Korea in 1992, I returned to ITC Morehouse School of Religion

to complete my ministerial studies. I retired from the U. S. Army in August 1993 and, in1994 joined Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church where one of my first accomplishments was to partner to establish their Men's Ministry. I left Shiloh to go to Pastor St, James Missionary Baptist Church in Ludowici, Georgia where I remained for 4-1/2 years before becoming the Pastor of Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church and remained for 24 years as of April 1, 2023.

To help understand why the new approach in this local exegesis, prior to pastoring the above churches in the United States, Pastor Gundy earned a professional teaching certificate and has worked as a middle school social studies teacher in the public-school. There he was also a football, basketball, track, and soccer coach, as well as Athletic Director, and House Administrator. He also taught while in the military as an instructor at the US Army Administration School and at the US Army Infantry Center of training management and operations, where he teamed to develop a training management cycle. He is a consultant and advisor to faith, business, Human Rights Organizations, pastors, and community leaders. Using the skills and experiences he acquired, he has developed tools and educational approaches to ministry at MSMBC. As a result of the interviews with the Site Team Members they provided the following information as part of their assessment.

As the leader, he plans the Church and projects that are shared through an annual executive summary, and he has led teams and is noted for seeking input from leadership, ministry team leaders, and members. He participates in leadership training for himself and his leadership teams. As the Pastor, annual planning meetings, quarterly leadership meetings, and training are mid-point check-in meetings to get feedback from surveying all congregation members.

B. Ministerial Competency Report Site Team

As the leader, Rev. Paul Hassell reveals that Pastor Gundy plans the Church and projects that are shared through an annual executive summary, and he has led teams and is noted for seeking input from leadership, ministry team leaders, and members. He participates in leadership training for himself and his leadership teams. As the Pastor, annual planning meetings, quarterly leadership meetings, and training are mid-point check-in meetings to get feedback from surveying all congregation members. He has hosted appreciation events at the Church and other venues and in his home as part of leadership development through fellowship. He consistently invests in biblical and leadership education; and develops strategic plans for church leadership and development. The site team shared that more development is needed to provide the congregation with opportunities to participate in service. (This will have to be further defined because of the virtual implementation of our school of thought' Bible Study and a need to train new leaders in our upcoming leader's training to address the various ministry needs after the post-pandemic.

To improve ministry competence, delegating more tasks to ministry leaders would help; however, they first must be willing and trained to take on the various tasks of ministry. As a prophetic agent, the site team recommendations revealed that the prophetic prayer at City Council is one example of the Pastor's voice which is now headed to the Supreme Court for consideration due to the President of City Councils' reactions to his prayer. Additionally, he has spoken at social justice events, sponsored social justice events for the public, directed the Jacksonville Leadership Coalition, and filed lawsuits against local and state governments regarding voting irregularities and injustices. He has participated in and helped organize

transportation to the polls for citizens to vote. He is currently pursuing a doctor of Ministry in Social Justice, leading community events, prayer meetings, and rallies around social justice issues locally and statewide when his prophetic voice in Jacksonville began in 2004. As the religious and spiritual educator on Wednesday evening, he teaches Bible study and interacts through conversations with children and adults. Consistently conducts mid-day bible study and children's time during morning service. As part of church development, he sanctions Vacation Bible School and Bible Power Enrichment Hour vs. Sunday School to ensure the Bible is used extensively in congregational training. As the Pastor, there is an open-door policy at the Church to ensure members have direct access to him to share concerns. As a counselor, he cares for families in grief and crisis by providing connections and networks. He serves as a mentor, has a big heart for those in difficult living conditions, does one-to-one and couple counseling, and is very resourceful through Church and community agencies. He has counseled and mentored children, youth and adults and provided business, life, and spiritual advice when sought.

As a Pastor, he regularly visits people in the hospital and communes with the shut-in and nursing home members. In addition, he organizes disaster relief efforts as a United Nations Chaplain or Disaster Relief. He consistently visits needy families and prays for the sick, shut-in, and hospital bound. He visits families in mourning and helps families spiritually and financially prepare for funeral services and participate in serving food and clothes to the Community. As a spiritual leader, he prays, listens, counsels, and provides deep spiritual care as a Pastor and friend. He demonstrates familiarity with the spiritual background of religious traditions through the programs, services, and events sponsored by the Church. I have witnessed him being a role model for my son, and he helps guide younger men in their relationship with God, provides

resources/retreat-like experiences for adults and youth and conducts outreach. He helps develop personal life plans for other individuals through the rule of life.

As an ecumenist, he should continue to work and connect with other pastors of good faith when we can pray or serve together. Good Friday was an ecumenical service, and he should also continue with a racially diverse staff while seeking a diverse congregation based on gender, age, ethnicity, and religious background. He has developed relationships with ministers and lay people from various denominations. Served as a worship leader in South Korea and has experience in multiculturalism as an instructor. He should continue his open interfaith dialogue discussion and invite other people from different churches to attend the services. (advice from the youngest team member). He should develop opportunities for multicultural worship and more profound studies that meet various cultures and ethnicities' needs. (Millennial, x. y). As a witness or Evangelist, he explains that the gospel to children and adults is articulated and understood by children and adults. He has attended hostile City and state meetings without confrontations and participates in peaceable protests and marches. He willingly prays and praises in public. He has built a program around witnessing, evangelizing, and outreach, which is still growing. He publicly expresses faith in community events with partnerships and at other engagements.

As the Pastor, he should delegate to a competent administrator to give more attention and skill to the Church. (Must find another administrator, the one we had took ill). As a pastor, it is understood that there must be order in the Church as a whole, including administrative meetings concerning the growth and development of God's people. In the book of 1 Cor. 14.40, specific instructions are given, "But all things should be done decently and in order." (ESV) It is

imperative for the Pastor (leader), who is assigned by God to serve as the shepherd over God's people, to possess strong and adequate administrative skills. Areas needing attention are; clarity and succinctness in defining and analyzing tasks or problems, using the congregation and material resources of the congregations while maintaining effective lines of communication. He should continue to conduct an autopsy of a deceased church to better the Church, including the executive summary and strategic implementation plan. Continue to develop and carry out plans for ministry and community efforts.

As a professional in ministry, he has acted professionally with the changing of worship leaders. This is an area of growth because he has taken on too many tasks, and the margins of life are thin. I am concerned about his long-term health, capacity, and relationships. I desire to see him end well but living in a rhythm of work and rest while delegating more to others is critical. He has handled combative and disrespectful leaders professionally, risen above negative rumors, addressed hostile individuals publicly from the pulpit honorably, and handled the dismissal of music staff members just and uprightly. I would like to see Pastor work on improving his ability to manage his time, limiting his workload by "saying no," and practicing self-care. We must keep in mind the following text. 1 Corinthians 3.16-17, "Don't you know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and together are that temple." 1 Corinthians 6.19-20, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? The Bible says you are not your own; we are bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies." Pastor Gundy should continue to deal with conflict as you were able to pinpoint and solve the problem in a way that satisfied all

parties.

Pastor Bryan Boyd felt it would help if Pastor Gundy continued to communicate clearly via email, text messages, and in-person meetings. In financial management, he has worked with the budget of the Church and led the leadership foundation in fiscal responsibility. He should continue writing grants for the Church and for the Leadership Foundation and implement tax laws as they relate to the Church. The 501c (3), he oversees and provides input on the annual budget for his Church and the Foundation. Maintain close contact with the accountants, trustees, and board of directors of the Church and the Foundation regarding budgeting and forecasting. As the Pastor and Non-profit CEO/President, he has managed three remodeling campaigns and assets that exceeded four million dollars. Knows how to conduct fundraisers and write grants with accountability. An assessment of the team stated that I might consider delegating the task to another associate or professional. (At the Leadership Foundation, this task was delegated, trustees have been trained, business manager and project manager conduct church affairs as collective administrators). As a matter of practice and Pastor, all financial issues are delegated to Trustees and Accountants who handle all tax issues about IRS at the Church and recently redelegated in the Foundation).

Finally, Jasmine Green and technology and social media management is an area that needs expertise and should be delegated. (This area is delegated to others with input by the Pastor). The website is well developed with a logo, sermons, service experiences, YouTube, Facebook, three media persons, and one security person. As the Pastor, more media skills will help enhance the ministry or a strong media team. Technology, for me, is an ongoing process. We need a designated and committed media staff member that will be on board in 2023. It must

always be said, "a leader is not a leader if a leader is unwilling to learn. No leader is ever who he or she thinks they are there is always room for improvement. Therefore, because of the recommendations, the project will address two issues for leadership growth. Technology for self and church enhancement as co- Administrator and a separate media ministry with a consistent rule of life as a leader to avoid burnout.

These standards will include theology as communal, formative, critical, and the expression of faith in churches in society. Since theology is transformative, this project's goals will be evaluated based upon achieving transformation in the churches to rethink their practical theology based upon sound Biblical doctrines written in Hebrew and Greek with practical theological applications for diversity and inclusion of all of humanity. There will be a clearly defined methodology chapter on intervention and methods to solve the problems of exclusion of diversity and inclusiveness in Black Churches. The interviews, questionnaires, proposed training classes, surveys, data collection, and expanding the planning management cycle as a Church Management Cycle for Diversity and Inclusiveness. The project will enable a systematic collection analysis and interpretation of the intended outcomes of the overall project. It will enable a method to be developed to help anyone who reads this dissertation on how to develop and grow a diverse and inclusive church and how addressing social justice will assist in the desired outcomes of the data collected.

Chapter 6 – Limitations and Implications for local pulpits to consider in leadership

This project was developed to challenge the Black Church to rethink and disrupt traditional Theology of Christian Education, to endorse its new vision and revised goals that supports its

efforts that will effectively address the contemporary issues facing Generations X, Y, and Z. However, we uncovered issues as we evolved in this process that must be revisited in depth in the future. Key areas are feminism, LBGTQIA+, National Publication Boards of various denominations, Systemic racism of the Evangelicals, Domestic Violence (Intimate Partner Violence), Kin Killing Kin, Church hurts, Social Justice Organizations, Black Pastors of various denominations, and Politics and Education. While we have proposed what we initially believed was an adequate list of issues that we must face, as we expanded our discussions, we realized that there are many areas of significant concern that must be added. While some are separate, many are related to the critical circumstances our respondents have experienced or face regularly. Examples of the areas we need to target are described below:

First, feminist movements in America must be addressed from a Black theological perspective. And the feminist movement has faced and challenged many social injustices that we have targeted; race, sexual orientation, inclusion, gender, to name a few. Although it has produced solutions that resulted in significant changes in America, this movement has exposed a myriad of crucial concerns for which solutions remain outstanding. The Black Church must continue to expose the ongoing inconsistencies in how women are treated on all levels and, it must amass the abundance of available information that speaks to this continuing appalling treatment of women and tackle it with an urgency through applications of practical wisdom and critical thinking. More emphasis must be placed on the existing research data and recommendations for how to care for Black and Brown females through the application of existing and revised Biblical solutions, these are all essential to the survival of the Black Church. Any educational endeavor in this area must also rely on academic *and* experiential

provenances. Secondly, there is a need to take a deeper dive into the LBGTQIA+ community to explore how to heal, how to dialogue, how to welcome, and how to be open to their presence in the worship experience. Additionally, we must mitigate existing language barriers and denominational issues.

1. On-Site MSMBC Limitations

There must be ethnography and ongoing intergenerational collaboration and partnerships that embrace diversity inclusiveness and belonging that must be included in our survey analyses. We are not there!

We are focused on the key issues, yet we must bring attention to the age-old adage that it is acceptable for a member of the LBGTQIA+ community to sing, play music, and direct choirs, but it is not ok for them to lead ministries or to teach. This project did not target this group specifically, thus did not gather adequate data to bring full attention to societal concerns that it generates, but it is understood that it needs attention. Our follow-up book, Rethinking Traditional Theology of Christian Education II will be an in-depth study in this area with the goal of establishing a robust curriculum designated to assist with building relationships in the Black Church and extending into the community it serves. MSMBC must, therefore, continue its focus on youth and young adults through a comprehensive and intentional approach.

We need to collaborate with the National Publication Boards to establish dialogs and partnerships around these goals. My initial contacts with them yielded very lukewarm responses which caused me to ponder if there is a fear, or lack of concern around taking on these issues. I then reviewed a sampling of their literature and found that it lacks the context necessary to address 21st century social issues. Although my opinion is certainly not meant to represent the

subjects of our project, some of the teachers and students in the categories we have interviewed have stated that sufficient, unbiased attention has not been covered in this medium. Finally, the Black Church must include, in its Christian Educational curricula, the existence of systemic racism that is practiced in many Evangelical settings both locally and nationwide. Thus, Christian Education must become an intrinsic track in training at the church, a fixed agenda that reflects the problems, verifies the facts and derives methods to increase awareness about Evangelicals' role in discriminating against our target populations. We must seek theological responses to combat these various forms of prejudices and biases that some right (wrong) wing evangelical's support. This we must do if we are forthright in our goals, collectively, to help save the soul of America.

2. United States Based Limitations

a.) Domestic Violence has been tolerated or ignored for far too long in the Black Church. "Intimate partner violence (IPV) affects all populations, regardless of race, education, or socioeconomic status, but Black women experience higher rates of IPV (43.7%) in comparison to White women (34.6%). Although evidence indicates that faith-based organizations and clergy play key roles in preventing and responding to IPV among Black women, limited research has been conducted in this area, and existing studies have focused on Black male clergy leaders' response to IPV." At least one domestic or intimate partner violence (IPV) is prevalent in all churches, however, it is the church's responsibility to address this from a Christian Education as well as a human perspective offering emotional support, and safety.

b.) The new Klu Klux Klan; the Kin Killing Kin, is not addressed in this project, but must be included as a module in our Christian Education training. The mind-set of youth, young

adults engaged in or victims of violence is destroying generation after generation through drugs, alcohol, violence, greed and "beefing." What should the Black Church do to help reduce the Kin Killing Kin in communities, schools, and America. We have the responsibility to introduce and teach the principles of love, and not hate, to our congregations and to implement programs that stop violence that ofttimes lead to death. We did not include training to address this growing and continuing concern in our communities.

Our scripture lessons and best practices for our congregation and communities must include messages about loving one's neighbors and supporting their safety and wellbeing to eradicate crime in communities.

c.) Church tribulations are not uncommon in Christianity. Research by Imogene Lowery of Bethel University informs us in her dissertation, "The Impact of Hurts on Effective ministry in Local African American Church," revealed "when people were wounded they reverted to passive 1 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7666029/ aggressive behaviors… 2 Since church hurt can cause many different reactions that may be devastating, and one of the ways for the Black Church to address Church hurts is to develop an purposive platform upon which Christian Education can teach and the pulpit can preach what the scriptures says about church hurt. Ephesians 4.1-16 provides insight into the unity of the body of Christ. A close look at Proverbs 16.28 and 20.19 are other essential scriptures that should be used to teach about church hurt and begin a healing process.

d.) Social Justice organizations must be surveyed to determine their perspective of the role of the Black Church in the 21st century as it relates to various social justice issues. We must also devise a smart plan that we must use to teach Biblical social justice from a scriptural

perspective to educate, inform, and mobilize the Black Church to properly address social justice issues. Social justice organizations have at times criticized clergy and the church when it ignores incidents that occur locally and nationally around police misconduct, judicial prejudices, and political discrimination. To establish a common understanding and develop common practices, we must begin to initiate discussions that promote establishing relationships with these organizations and strengthen our ability, collectively, to bring about change.

3. While developing this research project, we discovered the need to expand interviews to include additional denominations with the intent to amass a greater sample of data that would provide a more representative perspective of pastors and polity amongst denominations. This would also help us to set limits and regulations within assess data. We learned very quickly that some pastors hesitated to address the challenge statement." A change in church polity would be essential. Lowery, I. (2017). The Impact of Hurts on Effective ministry in Local African American Church [Doctoral thesis, Bethel University]. Spark Repository. https://spark.bethel.edu/etd/409. Not just essential for the church but a change in church polity would cause a change in community if ethically, morally and clear biblical perspectives of what God says about loving your neighbor as one loves themselves."

Finally, the melding of education and politics needs its definition in a comprehensive research methodology to be clear and consensus driven. This will require a cohort approach for educators and politicians to conduct additional research to determine how the church, educators, and politicians can work together towards a common goal. This provided an opportunity for subjects such as abortion, economic justice, education, guns, judicial justice and law enforcement accountability. An uninformed pastor or church is a platform for ignorance which

hurts the marginalized in the church and community.

This project and these observed limitations are ways to provide an opportunity for local pulpits to increase and promote youth and young adult leadership in the church. The implications of not addressing the Generations X, Y, and Z perspectives will cause further declines of our current youth population. Generations X, Y, Z, and Millennials expressed their opinions with clarity and specificity and, although they expressed their belief that the Black Church is vital, they insist that it must change to be free of judgment, media savvy in its communications goals, diverse and inclusive. The input to the project provides essential insight that requires disruption in the educational process in the Black Church if it intends to impact and embrace the totality of the community it serves.

4. Implications

What can local pulpits do to attract and increase leadership in their churches? The local pulpits must be willing to be open to diversity and inclusion in leaders of appropriate age groups in the areas of mentor leaders, security, junior deacons (male/female), and allow upcoming leaders to shadow current leadership in all ministries of the church as well as receive formal leadership training in. There is nothing wrong with Leadership Mentorship Programs (LMP). Natasha Sistrunk Robinson's book, Mentor for Life states, "Why do we need mentoring in the church?" You will find that mentorship is part of discipleship and provides for expansion of God's mission to make disciples.

What can denominational leadership do to increase youth and young adult leadership in the church? The answer is provided in number 1 above. However, a further expansion to the answer to these questions requires the church to see mentoring as a call to action, commitment to

others, commitment to community and commitment to relationships. Natasha Sistrunk Robinson makes this very clear in her book on mentoring above. It is another way to love your neighbor as self. No leader goes anywhere without followers and therefore, servant and relevant leadership is essential.

APPENDIX A: RESOURCES AND TEACHING TOOL KIT FOR RETHINKING TRADITIONAL AND PRACTICAL THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION TO ATTRACT GEN X, Y, AND Z

Here are some examples of curricula for Christian education that cover diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism, age, sexual orientation, and race:

- Boston College School of Theology and Ministry: The school offers courses that explore diversity and justice in the curriculum. The courses aim to encourage encounter and engagement with racially diverse communities through events and activities sponsored by Boston College, STM, and the local area.
- LGBTQ-Inclusive Curriculum: Some states in the US require that the social studies curriculum include the contributions of LGBTQ figures and their roles in contemporary society. This legislation aims to create a safer, more accepting school environment and to improve public health outcomes for LGBTQ youth.
- The Episcopal Academy: The school recognizes that diversity includes everyone and has many dimensions, including but not limited to gender, geography, learning style, race, ethnicity, religion, and socioeconomic status. The school's curriculum aims to foster a sense of belonging and respect for all.
- Bishop Blanchet High School: The school promotes all forms of diversity, including but not limited to ability, age, belief, ethnicity, family structure, gender, gender identity, race, religion, and sexual orientation. The school's curriculum aims to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.
- Brown University Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning: The center offers a seminar that addresses diverse considerations for course design and student engagement

along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity, and gender identity, sexuality, socioeconomic class, age, religion, and disability. The seminar aims to help instructors create and maintain a classroom space where differences are respected and valued.

- Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power, and Privilege: This toolkit is meant for anyone who feels there is a lack of productive discourse around issues of diversity and the role of identity in social relationships. The toolkit provides historical context about the politics of identity and the dynamics of power and privilege, and it helps build greater self-awareness. The toolkit includes activities that can be modified to better fit a group's unique needs.

These examples show that curricula for Christian education that cover diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism, age, sexual orientation, and race are available and aim to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students. They also highlight the importance of promoting all forms of diversity and fostering a sense of belonging and respect for all.

Here are some examples of curricula for Christian education that cover diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism, age, sexual orientation, and race:

There are Christian education programs that specifically focus on diversity and inclusion. Here are some examples:

Addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Christian School: This program is offered by the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and aims to help Christian schools address diversity, equity, and inclusion in their communities. The program includes a strategic, well-planned, and mission driven.

approach that involves defining terms and understanding the issues, multicultural training of all school constituencies, and ongoing evaluation and improvement.

- Leading Diversity-Oriented Ministries: This program is offered by the Berkeley School of Theology and prepares church planters, pastoral leaders, ministry leaders, and higher education professionals for diversity-oriented ministries. The program includes courses that explore diversity and justice in the curriculum and aim to encourage encounter and engagement with racially diverse communities.
- Diversity in the Christian School: Cultivate a Diverse and Inclusive School Culture: This program is offered by the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education (CACE) and aims to help Christian schools strive for both diversity and inclusion. The program includes fostering a sense of belonging and respect for all, reflecting the desired goal in representation and influence, and genuinely believing that being an inclusive organization reflects God's intention and provides the best education for students
- Christ-Centered Rationale for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: This program is offered by Whitworth University and aims to become a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive community that is grounded in the primary commitment to the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The program includes seeking reconciliation across all the boundaries that divide us, seeking peace, justice, freedom, and inclusion, and praising God for the vast diversity of creation and for fulfilling the promise to bless all the nations by including them in Christ. These programs show that Christian education can be inclusive and diverse, and they aim to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

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They also highlight the importance of promoting all forms of diversity and fostering a sense of belonging.

Here is a list of subjects and related topics for a curriculum for diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism, age, sexual orientation, and race to teach in a church to attract Generation X, Y, and Z.

1. Introduction to Diversity and Inclusion

- Importance of diversity and inclusion in the church
- Biblical basis for diversity and inclusion

2. Understanding Multiculturalism

- Definition of multiculturalism
- Cultural differences and similarities
- Cultural competence and humility and cultural sensitivity awareness

3. Age and Generational Diversity

- Definition of age and generational diversity
- Generational differences and similarities
- Intergenerational relationships
- Ageism and stereotypes

4. Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

- Definition of sexual orientation and gender identity.
- LGBTQ+ terminology and concepts
- Biblical perspectives on sexual orientation and gender identity
- Creating a safe and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ individuals

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5. Race and Ethnicity

- Definition of race and ethnicity
- Racial and ethnic differences and similarities
- Racism and prejudice
- Biblical perspectives on race and ethnicity.

6. Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in the Church.

- Strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion in the church.
- Creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Addressing issues of diversity and inclusion in church leadership and decision-making.

This curriculum aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of diversity, inclusion, multiculturalism, age, sexual orientation, and race in the context of the church. It should always include biblical perspectives on these issues and strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion in the church. The curriculum is designed to create a safe and inclusive environment for all individuals and to foster a sense of belonging and respect for all. Below is a curriculum with modules and objectives to be used to teach in Christian Education.

Module 1: Teaching Inclusive Christian Education

Objective 1 – Addressing age-related issues that are age-appropriate and intergenerational activities.

Objective 2 – Welcoming LBGTQIA + individuals: Understanding sexual orientation, through dialogue, discussion in safe and supportive spaces.

Objective 3 – Fostering racial inclusivity: Anti-racism education, embracing cultural diversity as a salad bowl.

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Objective 4 – Addressing the scientific evidence of understanding age, sexual orientation and race.

Module 2: Promoting Social Justice in Christian Education

Objective 1 – Understanding social justice concepts and their relevance.

Objective 2 – Discussing how Christian education can contribute to social justice.

Objective 3 – Identifying specific actions and initiatives for promoting justice.

Module 3: Building Intercultural Competence

Objective 1 – Developing intercultural communication skills.

Objective 2 – Recognizing and addressing biases and stereotypes.

Objective 3 – Encouraging cross-cultural dialogue and understanding.

Module 4: Practical Strategies for Implementation

Objective 1 – Create inclusive curriculum and materials on ethnography.

Objective 2 – Training educators and leaders on Biblical diversity and justice.

Objective 3 – Developing a community outreach and partnerships list and events.

Module 5: Case Studies and Best Practices

Objective 1 – Sharing success stories from churches that have embraced inclusivity and justice in America. How, Why, Where Who (Write down three things that could be modeled.)

Objective 2 – Analyzing challenges and solutions of inclusion, diversity, multiculturalism, age, sexual orientation and race from real-world examples within the local and global church.

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Objective 3 – Sharing success stories from other churches that have embraced the grace of inclusivity and justice.

Module 6: Nurturing a Supportive Church Community

Objective 1 – Promoting open dialogue within the church.

Objective 2 – Encouraging empathy and active listening of church and community.

Objective 3 – Creating a safe space for discussions on age, sexual orientation, and race.

Objective 4 - Intentionally engage the community outside the walls of MSMBC with youth, parents, and community activities. (Define the activities, what would the community want?)

Module 7: Moving Forward – Action Plans

Objective 1 – Each participant or church group creates an action plan for implementing what they've learned.

Objective 2 – Identify specific steps and timelines for making changes in small groups.

Objective 3 – Setting measurable goals for a more inclusive and socially justice church by becoming involved in the community and addressing social justice issues.

Some Curriculum Research and Tool Resources specifically for this curriculum are below:

- Andrews, Dale P. & Smith, Robert London Jr., Black Practical Theology, Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas 76798
- Perkins, Spencer & Rice, Chris., More than Equals, Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel, InterVarsity Press, P. O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515
- Chandler, Paul-Gordon., God's Global Mosaic, IVP Books, InterVarsity Press, P. O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515
- Elmer, Duane., Cross-Cultural Conflict, Building Relationships for Effective Ministry, InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515
- Hooks, Bell., Teaching Critical Thinking, Practical Wisdom, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, Third Ave, New York, NY 10017

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- Cohen, Pedro Irvin, Dr., A Charge To Keep, The Changing Black Church Post Civil Rights, utskirtspress, Denver, Colorado.
- Allberry, Sam., Is God anti-gay?, The Good Book Company
- Alsgaard, Erik., Living Faithfully as Friends and Family, Becoming the People of God, Cokesbury, 201 Eight Avenue South, P.O. Box 801, Nashville, Tennessee 37202-0801
- Gaines, Jack., My Brother's Keeper Not My Brother's Killer, Reconciliation: The Global Tool for Restoration, His Plan Publishing, For Word, LLC, P.O. Box 9708, Chesapeake, VA 23321
- Sernett, Milton C., Afro-American Religious History, A Documentary Witness, Duke University Press, Durham, NC
- King, Jr., Martin Luther., strength to love, Augsburg Fortress, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440.
- Rah, Soong Chan., Many Colors, Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church, Moody Publishers, 820 N. LaSalle Boulevard, Chicago, IL 60610
- Shin, Sarah., Beyond Color Blind, Redeeming Our Ethnic Journey, IV Books, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426
- McNeal, Brenda Salter and Richardson, Rick., The Heart of Racial Justice, How Soul Change Leads to Social Change, InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 6015-1426
- Yancey, George., Beyond Racial Gridlock, Embracing Mutual Responsibility, IV Books, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515-1426
- Cone, James E., God of the Oppressed, HarperCollins Publishers, 10 East 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022
- Bacon-Thayer, Barbara J., Transforming Critical Thinking, Thinking Constructively, Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1234 Amsterdam Avenue, New York, NY 10027
- Swetland, Kenneth L., Facing Messy Stuff in the Church, Kregel Publications, 2540 Oak Industrial Dr., NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505
- Lynn, Jack., Clear Vision, Wesleyan Publishing House, Indianapolis, Indiana 46250
- Keener, Craig s., & Glenn Usry., Defending Black Faith, Answers to Tough Questions About African-American Christianity, IV Books, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 1426
- Ferguson, Rachel S., & Witcher, Marcus M., Black Liberation through the Marketplace, Hope, Heartbreak, and the Promise of America.
- Day. Keri., Unfinished Business, Black Women, the Black Church, and the Struggle to Thrive in America, Orsis Books, P.O. Box 302, Maryknoll, New York 10545-0302
- Kim, Grace Ji-Sun, and Shaw, Susan M., Intersectionality Theology, Fortress Press, P.O. Box1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440-1209

APPENDIX B - SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey Questions

The following research questions were asked of Gen X, Y, and Z members of MSMBC there were a total of 12 surveyed, three were generation X, four were Generation Y and two were generation Z.

1. What can MSMBC do to increase the number of youth/young adults to be active members in the church?
2. What should MSMBC do to become more diverse, inclusive and multicultural?
3. How can Christian education in the church be used to address age, sexual orientation and race in the church through social justice?
4. What should the Black Church do to connect with the younger generations of X, Y, and Z?

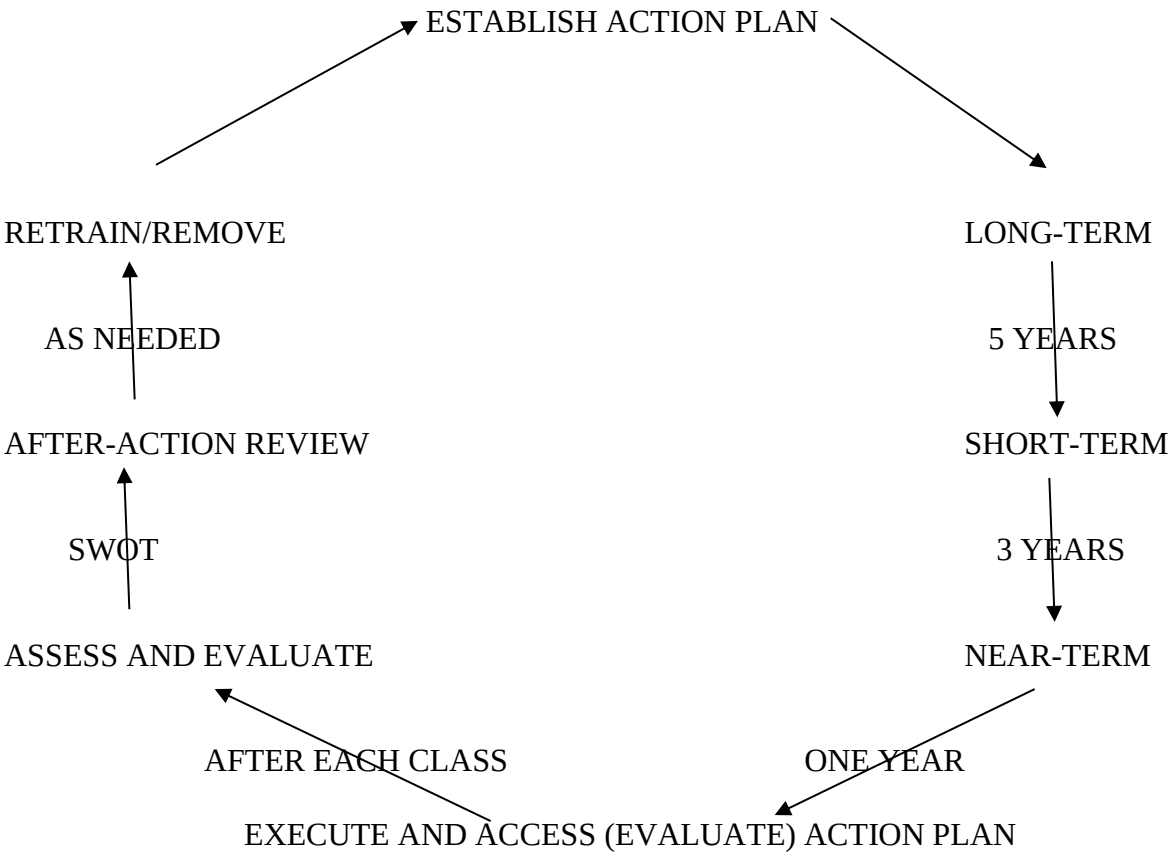
The following research questions were asked of two Senior Pastors, one Executive Pastor and four observations were made of various denominations: AME, Baptist, nondenominational and multicultural church.?

a. How can the Black Church rethink its practical theology of Christian education and become more diverse, inclusive, multicultural by addressing age, sexual orientation and race as a social justice issue?
b. How should we approach social justice in America from a spiritual and intergenerational approach based upon the failures to consider multicultural, diverse and inclusive churches?

PAGE 2 APPENDIX - B SURVEY QUESTIONS

c. What would be the outcome of the African American Churches in America today if they fail to rethink their practical theology of Christian Education by not becoming more diverse, and inclusive through social justice that considers intersectionality of age, sexual orientation and race to help the younger generations to return to Christ and the church?

APPENDIX C: CHURCH TRAINING MANAGEMENT CYCLE FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION



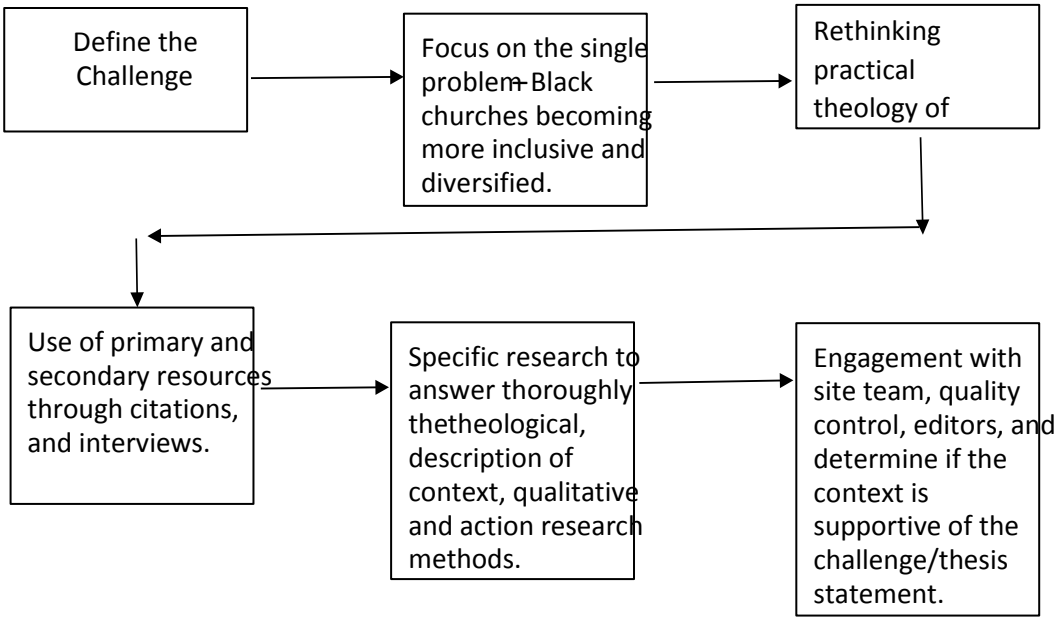
This was originally developed in 1989 at the United States Infantry Center and the model is public domain information and is not copyrighted. It was part of the Training Management Operation Manual that I wrote for the school as Field Manual FM 22-5 that I taught from 1988 to 1991. The model was taught to Officer Candidate School, Officer Basic Course, Officer Advanced Course and the Advance Non-Commissioned Officers Course. It provides planning for actions, training calendars, executions of objectives and assessment of rubrics. The premise of completing a mission requires an after-action review of what was accomplished, what went

wrong, what needs to be fixed or abandoned. It has been used in my ministry for family life management, marriage management, business management, church management and youth development. This will be used in the project to help churches rethink their practical theology.

APPENDIX D - CHURCH MANAGEMENT TRAINING CYCLE QUALITY CONTROL FOR RETHINKING TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Church Management Training Cycle for rethinking practitioner Christian Education to attracting X, Y, and Z generations has two key components that should be considered. A total quality management process to guide the outcomes is known as a process quality control chart similar to the one below as used in the project. The information in the process control chart would be applicable to the desired outcome of what is being taught and is an example only. These two charts are essential to developing a Christian Education program for rethinking practical theology. The total quality management chart provides a structured approach to manage what you are doing systematically and to make sure you continue the process in an orderly manner and take into consideration SWOT- Strengths, Weaknesses, Obstacles and Threats. See a proposed total quality management chart below as an example to consider.

EXAMPLE OF A QUALITY CONTROL CHART


Define the Challenge
Focus on the single problem – Black churches becoming more inclusive and diversified.
Rethinking practical theology of
Use of primary and secondary resources through citations, and interviews.
Specific research to answer thoroughly thetheological, description of context, qualitative and action research methods.
Engagement with site team, quality control, editors, and determine if the context is supportive of the challenge/thesis statement.

APPENDIX E - HOW TO USE THE TRAINING MANAGEMENT CYCLE

The Church Management Training Cycle is located in Appendix B with further explanations on how to use it in your church for vision development for rethinking practical theology of Christian Education in the Black Church through the training management cycle tool.

The training management cycle was originally developed in 1989 at the United States Army Infantry Center, Fort Benning, Georgia, now Fort Moore in Columbus Georgia. The model is public domain information and is not copyrighted. It was part of the Training Management Operation Manual that we wrote for the school as part of a Field Manual FM 22-5 that I taught from 1988 to 1991. The model was taught to Officer Candidate School, Officer Basic Course, Officer Advanced Course, and the Advance Non-Commissioned Officers Course. It provides a model for teaching. In this project, rethinking practical theology of Christian Education over a period of five (5) years to to implement and accomplish if not sooner. The plan is to implement a Christian education program to attract the X, Y, and Z generations to the Black Church by addressing age, sexual orientation, and multiculturalism through the lenses of social justice issues.

The premise of completing a mission requires the development of a plan by using the curriculum and tools provided in the project. Under the long-term objectives, begin with the end in mind, which is to attract Gen X, Y and Z to attend your church. This should be over a period of five (5) years. The short-term planning should be over a period of three (3) years and the near-term planning and execution should be what you do over the next year (12 months). What you do over the next twelve months quarterly is your execution phase of rethinking practitioner theology of Christian education and assessment after each objective to determine if the

objective was accomplished. If the objective is accomplished or not and after-action review of what was accomplished, what went wrong, what needs to be fixed or abandoned. It has been used in MSMBC ministries for 25 years, and for family life management, marriage management, business management, church management and youth development. This is provided to help Black Churches rethink their practical theology. See Appendix A

However, what are the lessons learned from the respondents and the original curriculum/tool kit that would change rethinking the practical theology of Christian Education to attract GenX, Y, and Z generations by being more diverse, inclusive, multicultural and addressing age, sexual orientation and race over the next one to five years. (Modules and Objectives are synonymous for this project)

APPENDIX F - IRB Research Protocol

New York Theological Seminary
Institutional Review Board Application
Research Protocol

1. List your name, contact information, and the name of the institution, course, or project to which your research is related. List the names and contact information for your faculty advisors to this project (or note for faculty designed classroom assignments or faculty research, n/a).

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2. Explain the nature and purpose of this research. What do you hope to learn and why?

How can rethinking traditional and practical theology of Christian education change the culture, and acceptance of diversity, inclusiveness through social justice regardless of age, sexual orientation and race. More specifically, how can faith leaders and Christian faith leaders better engage congregations in Black Churches to become more diverse, and inclusive through social justice to attract the millennials, x, y and z generations and regardless of age, sexual orientation and race become a true New Testament Church as found in Acts 2 that was inclusive, diverse and intercultural.

3. Explain the the Acronyms used in this dissertation below:

MSMBC- Mount Sinai Missionary Baptist Church

RTTTCE- Rethinking The Traditional Theology of Christian Education

RTPTCE- Rethinking The Practical Theology of Christian Education

PAGE 2 IRB RESEARCH PROTOCOL

4. Attach a copy of all survey instruments or a list of the questions that you intend to ask potential participants. See enclosure Appendix E of this dissertation proposal.

5. Describe your relationship with the potential participants. Are you their pastor, chaplain, teacher, friend or other?

The Principal Investigator has no formal relationship with any of the participants other than visits to the churches but no social relationships. They are pastors but not socially related. The site team members visited churches to observe congregations and to feel the reception of their presence.

6. Discuss any potential benefits you envision for the participants in your study. What is the good that you hope will result from this study? What benefits, if any, will accrue to the participants?

By participating in this study, the Principal Investigator hopes to gain knowledge of diversity and inclusion of the congregations and learn how they use Christian Education to address diversity and inclusion. To determine what may be used as an example for African American churches to become diverse and inclusive while addressing social justice issues of age, sexual orientation and race.

7. Discuss any potential risks to the participants in your study.

Are any of your participants members of vulnerable groups (such as children, persons with stigmatizing illnesses, whistleblowers, prisoners, persons with physically or mentally disabling conditions, etc.)? Explain the measures you will take to provide for their privacy. Explain how you will respond if a participant has adverse effects as a result of your study.

8. None of the participants are members of vulnerable groups. Participants' privacy will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. While none of the questions are expected to be emotionally or psychologically triggering, respondents can skip any question or drop out of the interview entirely, with no expectation of reprisal.

9. Include a copy of any consent forms that you are planning to use. The language used on these forms should be clear, simple, and straightforward, not laden with technical jargon. See below. Enclosure

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